DRAFT CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2015

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Introduction

As from 1st April 2015 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will officially open its doors for business, taking over the roles of Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council (with the exception of a number of areas that have transferred to Belfast City Council).

In addition to the amalgamation of these former local authorities, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will also acquire additional powers, assuming responsibility for the majority of the local planning function from the Department of the Environment as well as leading on the new Community Planning powers being introduced across Northern Ireland.

As the single largest re-organisation of Local Government since 1972, this provides the new Council with a significant communication requirement with all its stakeholders and the Communications Strategy will set out how this can be achieved at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council until April 2016.
Lisburn & Castlereagh’s Vision and Core Values

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council’s vision is to be a progressive, dynamic and inclusive Council working in partnership to develop our community.

The Council’s mission is to be a Council where residents can influence the shape of their local neighbourhood and priorities within it: where we have an accountable, open Council and powerful involved communities. A fundamental role of the Council and the individual Councillors is to represent our residents.

The Council has a number of core values:

- Accountability
- Civic Leadership
- Transparency
- Inclusivity
- Value for Money
- Excellent Standards

These core values will be at the heart of everything we do and our marketing activities will reflect the Council’s core values at all times.
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council’s Strategic Themes

The Council’s Corporate Plan has identified five key themes for Council over the next two years. These are:

- Community & Culture
- Strong sustainable economy and Growth
- Place & Environment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Good Governance & Service Delivery

There are a number of service priorities identified for each theme (details of all the Council’s priorities can be found in its Corporate Plan). While communications will be important for all of the Council’s priorities there are a number of priorities identified that will have a specific communications need;

*The Corporate Plan may be subject to change and if necessary this Marketing Strategy may be adapted to reflect any future amendments.*
Theme 1 Community and Culture

Supporting and developing communities and promotion and celebration of culture is important to the new Council and through our strategies we aim to provide a creative, supportive and shared platform for our communities to interact, develop and grow, utilising our facilities as local developmental, educational and entertainment hubs.

Under this theme our Priorities are to:

- Promote and encourage inclusivity through the introduction of appropriate plans and strategies to ensure that L&CCC meet the needs of different groups within the community

- Create a sense of place by designing and delivering a holistic organisation between Lisburn & Castlereagh, urban and rural areas with an emphasis on the customer and customer experience

- Develop a facilitative role for the council. Using an evidenced based approach, we will empower the community and support the needs of the community through citizen engagement

- Foster a customer (citizen and business) focused council, meeting the customer needs in an effective and efficient manner

- Provide a council which effectively engages with stakeholders to understand critical issues, making the council part of the community

- Lead on Community Planning to develop and implement a shared vision for the area

- Support and promote Community Development and nurture a shared civic identity, ensuring people-centred services that enables our community/voluntary sector to play an active role in shaping and developing their communities and place.

- Promote and nurture a shared civic identity process to strengthen personal, social and economic wellbeing and to enhance the lives of people who work, live and socialise within the council area
- Working in partnership, maximise the economic contribution into the District by attracting spend from inward investors and visitors as well as residents

- Provide innovative community focussed activity with arts, cultural, community and voluntary sector partners that is sustainable, accessible and of quality and promote opportunities for established and emerging artistic talent

### Theme 2 Strong and Sustainable Economy and Growth

The Council is well positioned for cross border logistics, modern industrial premises, a strong local support network and a highly skilled workforce with first class business support services and investment aftercare.

Under this theme our Priorities are to:

- Business development: enhancing the area’s profile as a place to visit and do business, encouraging social enterprise.

- Rural Development: with our strategic partners we will look to create and promote attractive and viable urban and rural hinterland.

- Tourism Development: develop the market and implement a regional major events strategy.

### Theme 3 Place & Environment

L&CCC boasts prime City living, characterful towns, historic villages, parks, open spaces and beautiful countryside with well renowned schools

Under this theme our Priorities are to:

- Create a positive, place to live work and visit and preserve the natural environment for the future ;
- Promote sustainable development through planning, policy and action;

- Strengthen civic pride through common sense policies, which strike a balance between making the area accessible to all and protecting our environment and management of waste.

- Increase rates of recycling, reduce energy consumption and promote sustainable outcomes by working with residents and businesses.

### Theme 4 Health and Well Being

The area delivers quality healthcare provision for residents through the Lagan Valley Hospital in Lisburn and Ulster Hospital, Dundonald and also Knockbracken Health Park.

Under this theme our Priorities are:

- Promote safe healthy communities and active lifestyles, wellbeing and independence of people and communities.

- Promote a more physically active and healthier community

### Theme 5 Great Governance and Service Delivery

The current economic climate means that the Council’s resources are more limited with central funding reduced, the impact of the recession on Council income and rising demand for services, particularly from the vulnerable. We are committed over the next 2 years to identify future resource requirements outlined in our Workforce Plan and also to joint working and shared service arrangements.

L&CCC will make decisions on service provision to its entire citizen base and will strive to provide high quality, cost effective services, which target local need. We recognise the importance of ensuring that there is effective support for
delivery and so a key priority is making sure that front line services are able to pull on the support they need from other services in a collaborative way.

Under this theme our Priorities are to:

- Engage, develop and empower our staff.

- Provide staff with the skills and knowledge and the attitudes and behaviors that support the service and the authority

- Ensure we meet the needs of the community through an outcomes and ‘evidenced based approach’

- Provide strong Governance with clear purpose and focus; and effective and accountable decision-making

- Communicate effectively both internally and externally while harnessing technology to improve how we engage with all stakeholders

- Be an open, honest and accountable council with transparency about our spending and performance; we will publish regular, up-to-date and relevant information, with established channels for questions and feedback and information for residents, local businesses and voluntary organisations.
Council Audiences/Stakeholders

The Council has a wide range of audiences and stakeholders.

While its primary audience is its ratepayers (who have elected the Council’s 40 elected members to represent them) this group in itself is multi-faceted, with many different groups holding differing views regarding the Council and having different needs which will be required to be considered by it. These differences must be taken into consideration and addressed as part of the Council’s communication activity.

With the creation of Northern Ireland’s 11 new Super Councils and the introduction of community planning powers and the transfer of the planning function, the Council’s civic leadership function has never before been so important.

This leadership, one of the Council’s core values, focuses on leadership which satisfies the collective needs of an area, in this case Lisburn and Castlereagh. The Council’s communications must therefore reflect the enhanced role of the Council and ensure that those stakeholders, who have an important role to play in making a real difference to the lives of the communities across the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area are included in meaningful dialogue.

Our key audiences/stakeholders include (but are not limited to);

- Residents, both existing and potential, of the new Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area
- Those working in and visiting the City
- Business owners and potential investors in the City
- Specific groups and communities eg. ethnic minority groups, those living in rural areas, older citizens, young people, people with disabilities
- Community and sports groups
- Local schools
- Statutory partners
- Employees
- Elected members
- Government departments
- Northern Ireland Assembly
- Lobby Groups
- Good Relations
- Local MPs and MLAs
Communication Objectives

This Communications Strategy aims to provide clear communications direction for the Council and its departments for the first 12 months of its operational life and will be based on the priories previously identified in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Communications of the Council will help shape the new brand identity and reputation of the Council.

To ensure planned, clear and concise messages and effective two way communication channels the Council will aim to:

1. Help stakeholders have a better understanding of the new Council, its roles, responsibilities and decision making process and how they can get involved in shaping decisions for the new Council area.

2. Promote and uphold the corporate identity and reputation of the new Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

3. Utilise technology and increased digital communications to facilitate better engagement with the Council’s stakeholders.

4. Engage effectively with staff, ensuring their full involvement in the change management process and ongoing service delivery.

5. Ensure effective communication plans are in place for Council services/initiatives organised across departments to ensure a consistent and collaborative approach to communicating and engaging with all Council stakeholders.
Key Tasks

1. Help stakeholders have a better understanding of the new Council, its roles, responsibilities and decision making process and how they can get involved in shaping decisions for the new Council area.

Lisburn City Council produces two biannual publications to its ratepayers delivered to all homes and businesses in the City: its CityWide Magazine is distributed in November and its Annual Report in June. Castlereagh Borough Council does not produce a comparable publication.

In its shadow form, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council has produced two Road to Reform magazines (to date) which has been delivered to all residents and one is planned for March 2015.

As the CityWide magazine is already established in the Lisburn area and given that city status will be retained, it is proposed to continue the CityWide magazine brand representing all areas of the new Council. This publication would be produced twice/three times a year and delivered to all homes in the Council area and would be a primary source for keeping the public informed about Council information.

Given this is the first year of operation of the new Council it is also proposed to produce an A-Z of Council services. Delivered to all homes and businesses this would outline any changes to operational services and details of how to contact all services and units.

While main tools, these publications cannot be used as the sole means of communications with ratepayers. Digital technology has enabled immediate two way communications to a mass audience and the Council will maximise its online communications with the expansion of a number of social media channels.
Face to face communications, through public meetings may also be considered appropriate for various campaigns and initiatives as well as community feedback via consultation.

A new website is being developed and will be operational at a high level from 1st April 2015. In the first twelve months this will continue to be populated and enhanced to ensure it becomes a key communications channel for the Council integrated to Facebook and Twitter, which has been registered for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

The Corporate Communications Team will continue to work with the media to generate releases and campaigns to highlight the work of the Council and to inform stakeholders how they can become involved in the decision making process.

The Lisburn city area is represented by local newspaper, The Ulster Star and Lisburn Echo, and there is a long established working relationship with this paper in the area. At present there is no comparable newspaper representing the Castlereagh area. Initial discussions have taken place with the Ulster Star who have indicated a willingness to work with the new Council on initiatives that will affect those residents within its circulation area. Those services that fall outside will be more difficult to promote through the The Ulster Star and in these cases, alternative arrangements may have to be considered.

Communications are an integral part of all Council activities. The Corporate Communications Team will work with all departments to ensure that appropriate communication plans are developed for departmental initiatives and services. Recognising that departments may have their own particular communications needs and audiences while ensuring a consistent approach to communications across the Council will be a key role for the Corporate Communications Team.
Following one year in operation it would be useful, not just for communications, if consideration could be given to the development of a city-wide residents’ survey to ascertain the views of citizens right across Lisburn and Castlereagh on the services provided by the new Council. Not only would such consultation provide valuable feedback for Council departments but would assist the Council in effective future planning as well as acting as a benchmark for subsequent performance management.

### Key Tasks for 2015/16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production of final issue of Road to Reform Magazine</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production of A to Z of services</td>
<td>Summer 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production of 2 issues of Citywide magazine</td>
<td>November 2015/March 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council Website live</td>
<td>April 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website development/enhancement</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify media opportunities to promote council’s services</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Input to Comms re Department Plans with Directors and Heads of Service</td>
<td>Ongoing and at Yearly Strategy Planning</td>
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Consideration also be given to the development and costing of a residents survey to be rolled out in the financial year 2016/2017.
2 Promote and uphold the corporate identity and reputation of the new Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

A new Council Coat of Arms and Logo has been developed for the new Council and will be agreed prior to vesting day of 1st April. Brand guidelines are also being developed to ensure consistent use of the new branding to encourage a strong brand identity going forward. These guidelines will be especially important to create a corporate style, given that two organisations are coming together with very different styles to date. These guidelines will be developed and managed through the Corporate Communications Team, with all Council departments having the responsibility to adhere to them.

The Council will also ensure a consistent approach to media enquiries by having a central point for contact for all media enquires through the Corporate Communications Team and an agreed system for reporting and responding to media enquiries in collaboration with the Corporate Management Team.

Key Targets for 2015/16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target for 2015/16</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development and Planning on Identity/Place Branding for the area</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of corporate brand guidelines</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
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<td>Review existing media protocols</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roll out of the new corporate brand for the Council</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure the new brand/coat of arms is being applied consistently</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with partner organisations to ensure consistent application</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respond to media enquiries within 24 hours of receipt</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3 Utilise technology and increased digital communications to facilitate better engagement with the Council’s stakeholders.

The world around us is changing and technology has had a profound impact on the way we communicate and engage with others. While traditional communication methods still have an important role, their reach is diminishing. Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council must look at new ways of reaching many different audiences. We will embrace digital communications and integrate them fully with our communication plans.

Case studies show that effective online communications are tailored to the audiences to be reached and the new Council’s communications must reflect this. There is not a ‘one size fits all’ template for communications.

Style, tone and channels must be considered for each audience and tailored accordingly.

While Lisburn City Council has a corporate face book page, Castlereagh Borough Council does not and neither former Council uses twitter, Instagram etc. A significant opportunity therefore exists for the new Council to introduce a number of previously unused communication channels and to allocate resources to it.

There are several facebook sites in Lisburn City Council. It is considered a valuable purpose is provided by some, however co-ordination and control is required in this area to ensure the corporate reputation of the new Council is upheld.

As previously stated a website for the new Council is currently under development to ensure ease of access to those services which are most readily in public demand and provide access to as many on line services as possible.

In the interim a temporary Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council is already in operation at www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk
## Key Targets for 2015/16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook to be posted to L&amp;CCC</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twitter for L&amp;CCC to be in place and developed subsequently</td>
<td>March 2015/Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a Digital Communications Plan for the Council to consider the most effective digital communications for its audiences including content style and resource implications</td>
<td>July/August 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and Report on existing social media channels in place to date with recommendations for controls</td>
<td>September 2015</td>
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4 Engage effectively with staff, ensuring their full involvement in the change management process and ongoing service delivery.

Employee communications is essential. The new Council will see people merging together from two previous organisations and new staff in place from central government departments.

In order to keep employees informed of issues which affect them, MCU has to date worked closely with HR and the Chief Executive’s Office. A number of Employee Bulletins and Team Briefings have taken place to date. As the new Council prepares to take over as the local government authority for Lisburn and Castlereagh, it remains a key communications objective to ensure staff are well informed.

Key Tasks (in conjunction with HR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee Events communication support provision</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Reform Publications to update employees on key information</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Briefings mechanism to facilitate internal information provision</td>
<td>July/August 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Employee Intranet to be built and rolled out with supporting infrastructure</td>
<td>July/August 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings/Discussions with HR likely to identify key themes for employee information</td>
<td>As required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Magazine production on lighter/informal areas to be published with cross-department representation from Officers</td>
<td>September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director Liaison for cross cutting communications themes</td>
<td>Monthly and as required</td>
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5 Ensure effective communication plans are in place for Council services/initiatives organised across departments to ensure a consistent and collaborative approach to communicating and engaging with all Council stakeholders.

The new Council has a diverse range of roles and responsibilities. The diversity of Council services is evidenced within the new Organisational structure as shown below:
In addition to the Chief Executive’s unit which has responsibility for among others performance management and community planning, the Council has four departments and 13 dedicated service units. Within these service areas there many different functions delivered. All of these functions will have some degree of communication need. It is important that, especially given the infancy of the Council, that communications are co-ordinated consistently. The Corporate Communications Team will work across departments to ensure that the key communication messages are delivered.

**Key Targets 2014/16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a communications template/checklist for departments to use to ensure that communications is given the necessary attention when planning and delivering services</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Corporate Communications Team will work with all departments to ensure that communications are considered in a consistent and co-ordinated manner across the Council</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>
Conclusion

The first twelve months of operation will see the new Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council develop and grow significantly in its new role. Not only will the Council be seen as a leader and key partner, central to the development of potential facilities and services, both Council and non-Council, across the new area, it must also provide a seamless transition of Council services from two Councils to one.

There will inevitably be challenges and opportunities along this journey and the Council’s communications must be flexible to adapt when needed. The Marketing and Communications Team will continue to liaise with Council Officers, the Corporate Management Team, Committee Chairmen and the Council when appropriate to ensure that, going forward, it provides a comprehensive corporate communications service to the Council and all its stakeholders.