

Public Document Pack



Leader and Members
of the Executive

Your contact: Martin Ibrahim
Ext: 2173
Date: 5 July 2012

cc. All other recipients of the
Executive agenda

Dear Councillor

EXECUTIVE - 10 JULY 2012: SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA 1

Please find attached the following report which was marked "to follow" on the agenda for the above meeting:

8. East Herts Communication Strategy 2012 (Pages 109 - 132)

Please bring these papers with you to the meeting next Tuesday.

Yours faithfully

Martin Ibrahim
Democratic Services Team Leader
Democratic Services
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MEETING : EXECUTIVE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 10 JULY 2012
TIME : 7.00 PM

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 MAY 2012 EXECUTIVE – 10 JULY 2012

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To introduce a new Communication Strategy and Action Plan together with a set of social media principles.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:</u> That:	
(A)	the 2012 East Herts Communication Strategy be supported.
<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE:</u>	
(A)	that the comments of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee be received; and
(B)	to recommend to Council that the 2012 Communication Strategy as set out at Essential Reference Paper 'B', be approved.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 East Herts Council currently has no formally adopted Communication Strategy. This report recommends the introduction of a Communication Strategy and presents an initial version alongside an indicative rolling action plan for 2012.
- 1.2 The strategy seeks to both, review the way we use traditional channels of communication, and to develop a range of other channels such as social media and councillor engagement, to

ensure that we engage and communicate with our various audiences in the most efficient and cost effective way.

- 1.3 The Task and Finish Group on Community and Public Engagement (2011) recommended improvement actions for communications and these have been addressed in the strategy.
- 2.0 Report
 - 2.1 The draft version of the Communication Strategy is attached as **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** with an indicative Communications Campaign Action Plan 2012 and The Social Media Principles attached as **Essential Reference Paper 'C'** and 'D' respectively.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
 - 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

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Report Author: Lorna Georgiou – Communications Team Leader
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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):	<p><i>People</i> This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</p> <p><i>Place</i> This priority focuses on the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</p> <p><i>Prosperity</i> This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.</p>
Consultation:	The report has been circulated to Heads of Service for comments.
Legal:	N/A
Financial:	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report however as further options are explored there may be a necessity to invest in particular tools.
Human Resource:	N/A
Risk Management:	Risks are addressed by the introduction of training and a set of new social media principles.

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Communications strategy

1. Introduction

The way we communicate is key to helping us achieve the council's vision and priorities. This strategy provides a framework to ensure that we enhance the reputation of East Herts by proactively and systematically providing clear, co-ordinated and effective communication and engagement.

The strategy sets out:

- what we aim to achieve through communication.
- the principles that we will follow in communicating with the people who live in, work in and visit the district
- the audiences that we want to communicate with
- the channels of communication that we will use
- a structure and process for generating and delivering key messages
- the protocols and training that we need to establish to enable us to use new media efficiently, effectively and safely.

Our overarching aim will be to systematically target identified audiences through a range of channels with key messages and campaigns designed to protect and enhance the reputation of the council. By taking an audience-led proactive approach we will increase the relevance of the information we provide and improve the efficiency with which we deliver it.

This strategy is also designed to complement the council's engagement with its communities and stakeholders by communicating through partnerships and networks of influence.

The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity has seven principles (lawful, cost effective, objective, even handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity, and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity) which will be built into all our communications activity.

This strategy will be supplemented with guidance to officers and councillors and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains relevant.

2. Audiences

East Herts Council is responsible for the delivery of a wide range of services. Delivery of these services, our strategic vision and future plans can have different impacts on groups, organisations and individuals across the district. The target audience of any communication, therefore, will vary depending on what is being communicated. In some cases people may belong to more than one audience group.

Our audiences include:

- Council tax payers and residents
- Those working in and visiting East Herts
- Prospective residents
- Specific civic, residential and community groups, including communities in rural or urban areas, or ethnic minority communities, faith groups, older, young and disabled people and vulnerable and socially excluded groups
- Businesses in the district and those who may relocate or invest here
- Voluntary organisations and groups
- Stakeholders and partners, including town and parish councils
- Central Government and Government offices
- The local, regional and trade media (press, radio and television)
- East Herts councillors and employees
- Key influencers/community leaders
- Service users
- Shared services

3. Messages

Strategic messages will largely be determined by the Corporate Strategic Plan which sets out our vision on a 4 yearly basis, and

the priorities and objectives that will action that vision. For 2012 the vision for East Herts Council is:

**To improve the quality of people's lives and
preserve all that's best in East Herts**

The communications service will continue to operate an account management structure, where every service, executive member and committee chairman will have a nominated communications representative. Within the strategic framework and through the account management system the communications service will identify the messages that need to be communicated and these will be categorised as follows:

- Good news stories
- Change management
- Topical messages
- Service messages
- Event promotion
- Reputation management.

The account management process will:

- develop a coordinated formal arrangement by which the communications service actively identifies topical messages in consultation with its clients: executive members, committee chairs, councillors, heads of services and senior managers affording regular opportunity to raise and discuss potential communications issues.
- provide a coherent framework by which the communications service can evaluate communications need across the council and both prioritise and focus resource in order to be more strategic, effective and efficient.
- enable the communications service to align its activity with key corporate measures (priorities, service plans, etc.) with the expectations of senior management, and with the news agenda as it develops and/or is set by external forces.

4. Communication channels

It is important that we use the most appropriate channels of communication for our identified audiences and for the messages that we want to communicate. Our various audiences have very differing requirements and needs and therefore require to be treated in a variety of ways. Our main communication channels are outlined below.

External Communications

Printed Media

- **Press Statements, Media Releases and Features**

The communications service runs a press office function, producing responses to media enquiries and proactive releases to publicise council services, decisions and performance.

- **Link Magazine**

Link is the council's magazine that provides information and features about the council and its services, as well as details of council events in the district and issues on which specific council teams and members want to consult with the public. It is distributed to every household in the district. We are also able to accept paid advertising which provides a small amount of income. Each councillor will receive twelve additional copies of Link magazine to distribute in their ward.

- **Service Information**

The communications service should be consulted with regards to front facing documents to ensure they meet corporate branding guidelines. These include leaflets about council services and procedures, strategy and consultation documents, as well as newsletters targeted at specific groups or service users.

- **Third Party Outlets**

East Herts Council will look to communicate with the community through mediums already available such as parish magazines (as recommended by the Community and Public Engagement Task and Finish Group 2011).

Broadcast Media

- **Television and Radio Interviews**

These are arranged where the council feels it is appropriate in order to communicate a particular message or on request from the local media.

Electronic Media

- **Email**

Recent studies show that email is still one of the preferred channels of communication. It is proposed that email mailing lists are established for key audience groups, which will allow people to sign up for the information they want and need, directly to their inbox.

- **New Media**

Social and new media has changed the way millions of people communicate. It encompasses a wide range of networks, tools and mediums through which people can communicate in multiple ways and formats. People are able to share content, opinions, information and ideas through text, images, video and audio. The council has recently increased its usage of social media especially Twitter and this is starting to prove beneficial to the quality of communication exchanges. In addition it is proposed that the communications service will actively pursue engagement in online conversations with the messages identified in the action plan.

There are many benefits to ensuring we maximise the use of social media. These range from reduction in costs associated with face to face interaction, to harder to quantify qualitative reputational changes achieved through more sustainable conversations rather than confrontations.

The council primarily uses the following forms of social media:

Twitter – The council has an active Twitter account that is currently used solely by the communications service. Our strategy will be to extend the authority to Tweet to heads of service, senior managers, the executive and committee chairmen. The authority to Tweet will only be activated on completion of appropriate training which will be arranged by the communications service. In addition councillors will be encouraged and supported to set up their own twitter accounts that will enable them to effectively engage with a wider cross section of their communities.

MySpace – East Herts Council currently has a MySpace page. However this has not been an effective tool for engaging with our audiences and with the re-introduction of Facebook it will be redundant. It is therefore proposed that the account is deleted.

Facebook – This will be reintroduced and be available to communicate time limited initiatives and special projects. The communications service will be responsible for the Facebook page, working alongside services to determine and create suitable content.

A set of online social media principles is included as an appendix to this strategy. The principles are intended to outline how East Herts Council's values should be upheld by authorised users in the online social media space when engaging as officers and members of the council.

- **Website**

Our website, www.eastherts.gov.uk, is an increasingly important forum for public communication and transactions. The communications team will continue to support the quality of content on the website, provide guidance and apply best practice to ensure good use of the site for communicating with residents. Our strategy aspires to develop intelligent links that add value to customers engaging with our website.

- **Network**

The e-bulletin sent out fortnightly to subscribers keeping them up to date with East Herts Council news. It is based on recent press releases.

Engagement and Partnerships

- **Councillor engagement**

Members are a unique and natural conduit for communication and engagement with our communities and stakeholders. They have the highest mandate to engage. Officers will support members with information, funding advice and access details where appropriate. The Task and Finish Group on Community and Public Engagement (2011) recommended greater levels of member engagement in line with the Localism agenda.

- **Partnerships**

East Herts Council has a variety of established partnerships that promote our vision, and assist us in realising our ambitions. These include but are not limited to the Local Strategic Partnership and its sub partnerships. We will aim where possible to work with partnerships to deliver joint messages, for example, the low crime rate in East Herts and the repeated ranking as one of the best places in the UK to live.

- **Key influencers**

During 2012 the communications service will be tasked with identifying our key influencers. Influencers are vital to improving our communications. The extent and type of influence they have will be determined to assess their:

- Expertise
- Impact and frequency of impact
- Connections
- Trends
- Market reach.

This will enable us to increase awareness of East Herts Council and the services it provides, with the aim of turning influencers into advocates. Key influencers will be identified from a range of business, community and voluntary interests.

Internal Communications

Electronic

- **Team Update**

We have an established monthly staff magazine. We will develop a volunteer staff editorial board to increase corporate ownership of this publication. The volunteer editorial board will be refreshed every four editions subject to volunteer buy in. The communications team will retain overall editorial control. Staff on the board will be acknowledged in Team Update each month.

- **Intranet**

The intranet includes the 'message of the day', other news and service specific content.

- **All-staff/group emails**

Emails should be used sparingly to communicate corporate information for immediate release when no other suitable channel is available.

- **Members' information bulletin**

The effectiveness of the regular members' information bulletin will be reviewed as part of this strategy

Face to Face

- **Team Brief**

The monthly corporate core brief that is delivered verbally to staff by their manager.

- **Staff Briefings**

Four sessions held quarterly. Staff will be able to nominate suitable subjects via Team Brief.

- **Open Door**

Regular monthly dates are made available for all staff to speak to the directors.

- **Staff Awards**

An annual event to thank all staff for their dedication, and to honour staff that have performed especially well during the year.

Following the 2011 Staff Survey results, internal communications activity will be reviewed during 2012 to establish effective tools for staff communication.

5. Corporate and Partnership Branding

Successful brands have a single external identity. All materials relating to East Herts Council services must carry the council's branding correctly used. In certain cases, individual initiatives can be branded to give a sense of identity to those involved in and affected by the initiative, and produce quick results in encapsulating what the initiative is about. It can also raise awareness of a project; explain its function and how it is relevant. Partnership branding is currently primarily under the banner of Everyone Matters and this 'brand' will be reviewed and developed through the LSP and its sub partnerships. The correct level of branding will be considered for all corporate messages. A light touch review of the East Herts Council branding will be undertaken during 2012 to enhance it where necessary.

6. Evaluation

Working out what works is integral to our communications strategy. East Herts campaign research will inform everything we do. It will allow us to make incremental improvements that increase mail open rates, publications read and online media hits to improve the strength of our communications and act as an aid to enhancing our reputation.

There will be seven key measures that we will use to evaluate our communications:

<u>Measure</u>	<u>2011/12 Score</u>	<u>Target for 2012/13 or 2013/14 where the data is unavailable until the Residents Survey results are presented</u>	<u>National Benchmark</u>
Resident satisfaction rating	51%	65%	61%
Value for money rating	23%	50%	42%
Resident informed rating	63%	70%	54%
Staff informed rating	35%	50%	<u>N/A</u>
Media influence rating *	<u>N/A</u>	<u>TBA</u>	<u>TBA</u>
Online influence rating **	<u>N/A</u>	<u>TBA</u>	<u>TBA</u>
Call volume	<u>TBA</u>	<u>TBA</u>	<u>TBA</u>

* Media type/ circulation/ ACE value/ favourability

** Reach/ amplification/ network

7. Monitoring

The delivery of key messages and the content, quality and scope of those messages will be agreed and monitored on a six weekly basis by CMT using the communications action plan. An indicative action plan for 2012 is attached as appendix to this strategy.

On a monthly basis the communications service will review our media and online influence rating. On a bi-annual basis we will review our targets against the residents survey.

An overall annual review of communications will be presented to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

Indicative communications campaign action plan 2012 ((please note this is an indicative framework for delivery and monitoring purposes. The content, i.e. the messages, will be identified through the account management system outlined in the strategy).

No.	Message	Outcome	Corporate objective	Key activities	Audience	Channel and level of branding	Frequency	Type of Message	Evaluation	
People: <u>East Herts is enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable</u>										
1	Sports awards	Nominations for appropriate categories by the deadline	Enhance our local community engagement by working together with our partners such as parish and town councils, for the benefit of our communities	Deadline for nominations	Specialist group (sports enthusiasts and participants)	Facebook	May – August 2012	Topical and event promotion	Nominations received on time	
						Twitter	Twice (deadline announcement and reminder)			
		Positive message of awards promoted		Sports award ceremony – Thursday 19 July	Residents	Mercury feature	4 editions			
						Stakeholders and partners	Key influencers/community leaders (Herts Sports Partnership)	Once – Leaflet	Good news	
						Mercury feature	4 editions			
					Residents	Twitter	Weekly update for a month			
						Press release	Post event follow up			
						Facebook	May – August 2012			
2	Jubilee Celebrations	Promotion of East Herts Council's contribution to the Jubilee celebration	Enhance our local community engagement by working together with our partners such as parish and town councils, for the benefit of our communities	Street parties	Regional Press	Media packs (release, area information and photos) sell in	once	Topical	Positive media coverage	
						Facebook	May – August 2012			
					Local Press	Twitter	Weekly			
						Press release	Twice			
3	3music	Attendance at event	Enhance our local community engagement by working together with our partners such as parish and town	3music final showcase – Saturday 7 July	Specialist group (young people)	Facebook	Active 18 May to 31 July (weekly updates)	Good news Event promotion	Positive media coverage Community engagement in event	
		Promotion of East Herts Council's				Residents	Twitter			

		contribution to the event	councils, for the benefit or our communities				weekly		
					Youtube		weekly		
				Local Press	Media pack		Once		
				Specialist press (arts)	Media pack – sell in		Once		
4	Olympics Celebrations	Promotion of East Herts Olympic torch relay and related events	Enhance our local community engagement by working together with our partners such as parish and town councils, for the benefit or our communities	Olympic torch relay	Regional press	Media packs	Once	Topical Good News	Positive media coverage Community engagement in event
					Residents	Twitter	weekly		
						Facebook	July - August		
					Local press	Media packs	Once		
Place : <u>East Herts is ensuring that the standard of the built environment is maintained and our towns and villages are safe and clean.</u>									
5	We will be unable to water flower beds, so there is a risk people may see flowers dying	The East Herts community understand the restrictions facing the council	Sustain the percentage of residents who are satisfied with our parks and open spaces	N/A	Council tax payers	tbd depending on relevance	tbd depending on relevance	Topical	tbd depending on relevance
6	Vantorts refurbishment opening	Vantorts playground successfully re-launched	Sustain the percentage of residents who are satisfied with our parks and open spaces	Official opening to be w/c 4 June	Specialist group (families)	Mumsnet (local)	Once	Service message	Successful re-launch Positive media coverage
					Specialist group (young people)	Facebook	25 May – 29 June		
					Local press and community groups	Official press launch/ media packs	Once with follow up		
					Residents	twitter	Twice		
					Parish Councils	Press release	Once		
7	CSP	tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd	Reputation management	tbd
8	Get Park Active	People encouraged to enjoy their local park	Sustain the percentage of residents who are satisfied with our parks and open spaces	Meet the animals in Pishiobury Park (Love Parks Week)	Specialist group (families)	Mumsnet (local)	Once	Good news & service message	Community engagement with
					Specialist group (young people)	Facebook	July - August		
				Open morning at Southern Country Park	Specialist group (families)	Mumsnet (local)	Once		

				(Love Parks Week)	Specialist group (young people)	Facebook	July - August				
9	Hertford Theatre	Promotion of Hertford Theatre as a premiere entertainment and arts venue	Ensure the sustainability of Hertford Theatre and explore possibilities for the theatre to be administered through a community trust	Courtyard Arts management of gallery - september	Residents	Facebook	Rolling Hertford Theatre Link	Reputation management event promotion good news and service message	Community engagement with Venue		
						Twitter	Weekly				
						Link magazine	Once				
					Local Press	Press release	Once				
				Specialist group (arts)	Twitter	Weekly	Positive media coverage and community engagement with venue				
					Facebook	Rolling Hertford Theatre Link					
					Special interest press (arts)	Press release					
				Hertford Arts Society 60 th anniversary – Olympics theme	Residents	Facebook	Rolling Hertford Theatre Link				
						Twitter	Weekly				
						Parish magazines	Once				
					Local Press	Press release	Once				
				Specialist group (arts)	Twitter	Weekly	Positive media coverage and community engagement with venue				
					Facebook	Rolling Hertford Theatre Link					
					Special interest press (arts)	Press release					

Prosperity: East Herts is safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.

10	East Herts is contributing to vibrancy of town centres – i.e. markets	tbd	Increase the economic resilience of the market towns working with the local business community	Hertford Farmers Market takes place the 2 nd Saturday of every month	Residents	Twitter	Monthly	reputation management event promotion	Positive media coverage Community shopping in market towns.
11	Parking – Safety is at the heart of what we do We are protected the economic wellbeing of East Herts Think local	tbd	Develop a practicable and pragmatic Parking and Transport Strategy and action plan which delivers integrated and value for money policies in respect to car parking, walking, cycling routes and vital bus routes	Adoption of strategy	Local press	Press release	Once		Residents knowledgeable of developments Positive media coverage
					Businesses	Network	Once		
					Residents and businesses	Twitter	Once		
				Bircherley Green MSCP refurbishment completed		Hertford Online			
				Local press	Press release	Once			
				Apton Road CP refurbishment completed	Residents and businesses	Twitter	Once		
						Bishop's Stortford Online			
					Local press	Press release	Once		
				Old London Road	Residents and	Twitter	Once		

				CP to be refurbished Introduction of 'bodycams' for Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO)	businesses	Hertford Online			
						Local press	Press release		
					Residents and businesses	Twitter	Once		
					Local press	Press release	Once		
					Trade press	Press release	Once		
12	East Herts Council is ensuring the economic resilience of the district	tbd	Increase the economic resilience of the market towns working with the local business community	Job centre plus/ hertford college – work preparation RDO 600k	tbd tbd	tbd tbd	tbd tbd	Good news	tbd

Working together to improve the efficiency of the Council

	Data Protection 100% corporate awareness and understanding of data protection issues by end of June 2012	N/A	Compulsory quiz for all staff to complete	East Herts employees	Team Update	Four editions (Feb, Mar, April & May)	Service message	Percentage of staff to have completed the quiz by deadline to be xx%
					Core Brief	Four editions		
					Staff Briefings	April		
					Poster campaign	Four posters available		
					Drinks mats	Once		
					Intranet video	Once		
					Oops! Tickets	Once		
	We are working together To create a well informed and engaged workforce that delivers services to the highest standards	Maintain our core services to a good standard and ensure high satisfaction with the Council as measured through the biennial Residents Survey.	Investors in People	Council tax payers	Twitter	Once	Good news	Awareness raising and positive media coverage
					Local media	Media release		
					Trade media	Media release		
					East Herts councillors	MIB		
					East Herts employees	1. Team Update 2. Core Brief		
			Staff Awards (the relay award for working together)	Businesses in the district	Network	Once	Good news and event promotion	Availability of sponsors for next event
					Local media	Once		
					Local media	Media release		
					Key influencers	Twitter for promotion of sponsors		
					East Herts councillors	MIB		

					East Herts employees	1. Team Update 2. Core Brief 3. Staff Briefings	1. twice 2. once 3. once	Good news	Increase in attendance
				Promotion of People, Place Prosperity	East Herts employees	1. Team Update 2. staff award ceremony	1. once 2. once	Service message	Staff understanding of the priorities and their part in delivering them
15	Value for money	Increase the percentage of residents who agree that East Herts Council provides value for money	N/A	Budget Consultation 2012	Residents	TBD – Subject to CMT agreement	TBD – Subject to CMT agreement	Reputation management	Percentage of residents who agree that East Herts Council provides value for money to increase by 27% in the 2013 residents survey
					Businesses	TBD – Subject to CMT agreement	TBD – Subject to CMT agreement		

Communications Team progression actions for 2012

1. Establish email lists for key messages in order to be able to utilise direct email marketing. This will be applied to the above campaigns when in place.
2. Undertake a review of internal staff communication.
3. Establish a social media training programme for officers and staff.
4. Assess the viability of individual facebook pages for specific projects.
5. Introduce an East Herts Council facebook page.
6. Identify key influencer/ advocate lists
7. Promote the use of twitter

Whats coming up:

Hydro scheme

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'D'

Social Media Principles

It is part of East Herts Council's Communication Strategy to effectively engage in social media. We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to manage and protect the council's reputation online and to selectively participate and engage in the online conversations that mention us on a daily basis.

Our Communication Strategy encourages officers and councillors to participate appropriately in social media and has created an official presence on many social media platforms. These principles have been developed to empower officers and councillors to participate in online communities.

8 Expectations for PROFESSIONAL online activities Speaking 'on behalf of' East Herts Council

- **Attend training:** All employees who wish to represent East Herts Council online must complete the Social Media Certification Training prior to doing so.
- **Follow our performance, conduct and behaviour policies:** The Officers' Code of Conduct sets out the standards that all employees should maintain in the workplace, and this includes online work. Be respectful, how you act online affects the reputation of you, your colleagues and the Council.
- **Identify yourself as a representative of East Herts Council:** At the outset you must state your name and the service you are representing. It is never acceptable to use aliases.
- **Monitor your relevant social media channels:** Make sure that you know what is being discussed, so you can respond when needed.
- **Keep records:** Online conversations are often short-lived and instant and therefore it is vital that we keep records of our interactions. Remember that online statements can be held to the same legal standards as traditional media communications.

- **If in doubt, do not post:** Online spokespeople must ensure that posts are accurate, not misleading and do not contain non-public information concerning East Herts. When in doubt, do not post; instead contact the Communications Team for further guidance.
- **Respect copyrights:** Always gain approval from, and give credit to, the owners of any content you publish online. For example; images, video, text, music and trademarks
- **Protect data:** Always 'Th!nk Privacy'

4 Expectations for PERSONAL online activities Speaking 'about' East Herts Council

- **Keep an eye out for compliments and criticism:** You are a vital asset for monitoring social media platforms. If you come across positive/ negative comments online about East Herts Council, that you consider important, then forward them to the Communications Team.
- **You are responsible for your actions:** When conversing online follow the Officer's Code of Conduct. Any action online which could potentially damage the reputation of East Herts Council will ultimately be your responsibility. Do not disclose information that is not publicly available. Engage, but use common sense.
- **Be conscious about mixing your personal and business lives:** Online, personal and business lives cross paths. Internal and external corporate contacts, as well as the East Herts community may have access to what you post, even if this was not your intention. Speaking about them in a negative, demeaning or offensive way is not acceptable.
- **Remember data protection guidelines!!!**

Reputation Management

There are particular rules of engagement for crisis response situations that must be taken into consideration. For example, deleting a post or blocking a user may escalate the issue, rather than resolve it. If you become aware of a comment, post or content that is inappropriate or poses a risk to East Herts Council's

reputation please bring it to the attention of the Communications Team.

Social media is continuously evolving and therefore these principles will be updated alongside the annual review of the Communication Strategy.

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