

Future Guildford – working together to shape our future **Communication Strategy**

Purpose

To set out communications during our *Future Guildford* transformational programme, including objectives, key messages and risks. The strategy is designed to help inform all those involved about the overall approach, scope and to set the tone for communications.

This strategy will evolve as the programme develops. It is supported by communications activities plans, which outline the timeline, tactics and responsibilities for each stage of *Future Guildford*.

Background

We cannot stand still. Customer expectations have changed; we have a wider role in the community and challenging financial pressures. Despite focused savings, wise investment and effective management, we currently have an estimated £10 million funding gap in the next four years, with growing uncertainty about our future funding.

We have already carried out some service reviews within directorates but we have taken this as far as we can. It is now time to significantly review our services as a whole and look at how we can be better and more innovative in our delivery, as well as make more savings.

The review is the Council's most far-reaching and comprehensive reorganisation, involving changes to our systems, structures, services, culture and head count.

Future Guildford is our transformational approach to achieve this and aims to:

- improve our services and customer care
- future proof our organisation
- modernise our services and systems
- make us more efficient
- deliver savings and address our financial challenges
- create an environment where there are better development opportunities for staff
- develop our culture into one that collectively adapts and changes to address the various challenges and issues facing us.

Future Guildford has three potential stages

- Stage one - external management consultants, Ignite, carry out an Opportunity Assessment and Focus study (complete).
- Stage two - if the Opportunity Assessment and Focus study identifies appropriate and significant findings, then CMT instruct Ignite to produce a Blueprint report (complete).
- Stage three – following CMT acceptance of the findings of the Blueprint report, councillor agreement is sought through the relevant committees. Following their approval we would then move to implementation.

Stage one started in July 2018 and took approximately four weeks. Stage two took place between September and November 2018. Councillor consideration and request for approval for stage three takes place at committee meetings in February 2019. In total, the three stages, including implementation could take 18-24 months.

Our corporate vision

Our latest [Corporate Plan for 2018-2023](#) has three fundamental themes, Place making, Community and Innovation, which support our Council's vision.

Transformation via our *Future Guildford* programme will help us achieve our ambitious Corporate Plan and supports one of the key aims under our Innovation theme:

- Using innovation, technology and new ways of working to improve value for money and efficiency in Council services.

Communications objectives

Internal audiences (primary focus will be on staff and councillors during all stages)

- To identify and target key stakeholders within our organisation to ensure they understand and are engaged with the programme.
- To ensure communications are informative and engaging to ensure our internal audiences read, understand, ask questions and get involved in the programme.
- To ensure clear, open and consistent messages about *Future Guildford*.
- To maximise use of all existing communication channels and investigate any new ones to ensure all those involved or affected are aware of the situation.
- To reduce risk by providing the right information, at the right time, to the right people, in the right way.

External audiences (key external communications starts closer to stage two and is dependent on stage three approval and implementation.)

- To proactively plan external messages and communications channels to ensure the right messages to the right people are available in the right way at the right time.
- To ensure all information aligns with committee decisions and communicate key information with the public.
- To maximise use of all existing communication channels and investigate any appropriate new ones.
- To inform customers about and encourage them to use self-service, digital channels where possible and appropriate, while providing support for the more vulnerable people in our communities.

Communications support and approval

Generally, the Communications and PR Manager, working with the Managing Director (MD) and Future Guildford project (FG) team, will approve most communications.

If appropriate, the Project Board may need to approve communications before publication e.g. key milestones, important messages or presentations.

The Communications and PR Manager, working with the Communications and PR Team, will support and lead on communications, ensuring they comply with our corporate standards. The team will work closely with the FG team to deliver effective communications for each stage.

The FG team are responsible for providing the initial content and informing the Communications Team as soon as possible, so we can build it into the communications activities timeline and plans.

The Communications and PR Team will support the FG team and will:

- offer advice about the best and most appropriate way to inform and engage key audiences
- create and coordinate communications plans and timelines
- act as an editor to check and distribute content
- support content creation and provide creative input to make content engaging.

Key messages

Below are some of the key internal messages that will be relevant at different stages of *Future Guildford*.

We need to improve and modernise our services, systems and customer care

- We need to keep up with the pace of change – our customers' expectations are changing, technology is changing.
- We need to be more efficient so we can deliver what customers want, when they want it and how they want it.
- The way we work and provide services will change radically – customers will do more themselves and more queries and issues will be resolved at first point of contact.
- We need to be flexible and able to continue to meet the changing needs and expectations of our customers.
- We will continue to focus on and support our most vulnerable customers in the best way possible.

We need to future proof our organisation and be financially self-sufficient

- We have an ambitious Corporate Plan to deliver and we need to maximise our resources.
- We need to do more with less and deliver savings: particularly with funding cuts and no overall government grant.
- Past individual service reviews have taken us as far as we can.
- We need to look at the Council as a whole to identify opportunities to make our organisation fit for the future.

We need to work together to change our systems, structures, services and culture

- *Future Guildford* is led by our MD and CMT - they will make decisions based on the outcome of each stage and recommend the best way forward to councillors.
- We want you to be involved and need your help in shaping our organisation's future.
- We want to create an environment where there are better development opportunities for staff.
- We want to develop our culture into one that collectively adapts and changes to address the various challenges and issues facing us.
- Be part of the changes - we need your suggestions and ideas.

There will be an impact and we will inform and support you

- *Future Guildford* is the Council's most far-reaching and comprehensive reorganisation and will not be a tweak or minor change to management or other structures.
- New integrated technology will improve efficiency and allow us to share and access information more easily across the Council.
- Our organisation's structure will change and *Future Guildford* will have an impact on head count.
- We appreciate that this type of wide-ranging review and the potential for change can be worrying for some and we will do all we can to support everyone through this.
- This will be a long-term project and we will be open to ideas and clear about what is happening and when.

Below are some of the key internal and external messages that will be relevant at different stages *Future Guildford*.

Despite a successful combination of focused savings, wise investment and effective management, the Council still faces significant funding challenges.

- We currently predict a budget gap shortfall for the Council of about £10 million in the next four years.
- We no longer get a general funding grant from the government.
- We have to find innovative new ways to generate income, such as rent from investment properties.
- *Future Guildford* will help us transform our services - and build on the £11 million of savings we've made in the last five years.

We provide a wide range of vital services that our communities rely on and invest locally to help our economy flourish

- We are reviewing our services and although the way we deliver them may change, we aim to keep providing them to a high standard.
- We provide convenient online self-service to help the majority of our residents and give focussed support for our more vulnerable residents.
- We offer a range of quick and easy to use automated services.
- Going online is easy and you can do it when it suits you.
- Help us make savings, maintain and re-invest in services by doing it online.

Communications related risks to reputation and progress include:

Possible internal risks and communications mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Low staff buy-in: Staff not on side, low morale, low take up of any new processes.	Ensure communications are regular, consistent and engaging and the vision of the future is compelling. Same story to everyone – not piecemeal depending on who they talk to.
Information does not reach staff at the right time or in the right way leading to a negative environment.	Plan regular communications - and in conjunction with milestones. Evaluate communications effectiveness at key points.
Staff leave the Council as they do not feel engaged or informed and possibly at risk of losing their job, putting more pressure on those who are	Use communications to ensure staff understand what is happening and any opportunities available as a result of <i>Future Guildford</i> , also the support

left, who may not have the skills or experience to do the job.	they can get and where to get it. Use and feedback information from exit interviews if appropriate into the programme.
Internal stakeholders fail to practically support the changes.	Identify key internal stakeholders and ensure they understand and are involved in the programme.
Lack of information leading to rumours and anxiety for staff.	Taking every opportunity and using multiple channels to disseminate information. Regular, clear and open internal communication.

Possible external risks and communications mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Residents, businesses or partners incorrectly perceive the Council is in financial crisis or has no plans to deal with funding challenges.	Proactively and appropriately, advising them and keeping them informed about <i>Future Guildford</i> , our financial situation and planned budget measures at key milestones.
Information is not made available in time and is reactive rather than proactive, resulting in negative publicity.	Ensure communications are planned in conjunction with the FG and Communications and PR teams.
Information does not reach service users or other stakeholders.	Targeted information, as well as general information to increase understanding and benefits.
Inaccurate information in the media due to misunderstanding or not taking a proactive approach to publishing information.	Effectively managing proactive and reactive media and other enquiries to minimise negative publicity and responding promptly.

To help reduce risk it is essential that:

- there is a regular and timely flow of information between the MD, CMT, Project Board, Communications and PR Manager and team and the Future Guildford team.
- we agree and regularly review the communications strategy and plans as *Future Guildford* progresses.

Target audiences and stakeholders

The table below outlines our key target audiences and stakeholders. We will review this as the programme progresses, as we will engage with different audiences and stakeholders at appropriate and different times.

Internal	External
All staff	All residents
Service representatives	Specific service customers
Programme board	Local businesses
MD and CMT	Partners and suppliers
Service Leaders	Tenants
Leader and Executive Councillors	MPs
All Councillors	Media
Briefings, workshop and drop-in attendees	Voluntary groups
Unison	Vulnerable or customers not digitally enabled
Affected teams or individual staff members	Parish Councils

Communication channels

For all digitally connected audiences:

- our website www.guildford.gov.uk
- our social media channels including [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

For all residents and tenants - including non-digital customers:

- Council printed and online newspaper - [About Guildford](#)
- *Contact Point* tenants printed newsletter.

For Council staff and councillors:

- regular updates on *The Loop*, in [By the Wey](#), specific all staff emails and the MD's weekly email
- *Future Guildford* [MD's blog](#)
- *Future Guildford* [section on The Loop](#)
- press releases also issued to CMT, service leaders, councillors and parish councils
- posters on staff notice boards, including outstations
- face to face briefings, workshops and drop-in meetings
- in person via line managers, service leaders or HR at their team and 1:1 meetings.

For specific or vulnerable customers:

- updates at regular ongoing meetings and via letter, leaflet or email
- direct meetings or in-person updates as necessary.

For external partners and stakeholders:

- updates at regular ongoing meetings or via email
- direct meetings or updates with specific partners or stakeholders as necessary.

For local media:

- press releases issued to regular media contacts list (local and regional press, TV, radio, magazines and online media)
- interviews, photo calls and features and management of reactive enquiries.

Budget and resources

The Communications and PR Manager will develop, lead and manage the communications strategy and plans, with support from the rest of the team. The resource capacity requirement across the team will increase as the communications activities within the plans increase.

There is no specific budget for *Future Guildford* communications.

Evaluation

We need to evaluate our communication on an ongoing basis, so that the activity and messages can be adapted as appropriate. These include:

- attendance at meetings, workshops or drop-ins
- FAQ and feedback from staff
- percentage of deadlines met for data submission
- visits to the MD's blog and website pages
- any feedback forms submitted
- feedback and response to specific or staff surveys
- media coverage or social media engagement.

***Future Guildford* Communications activity plan – stages one and two – opportunity and assessment study and Blueprint**

The activities plan below outlines the timeline, tactics and responsibilities for stages one and two of *Future Guildford*. It will evolve as the programme develops and supports the overall *Future Guildford* Communications Strategy.

The completed communications activities took place alongside direct communications, meetings, workshops and other activities by Ignite and the Future Guildford team during their work on the first two stages.

There will be a separate communications activity plan for stage three of *Future Guildford* depending on the outcomes and decisions made at the February 2019 committee meetings.

Important initial activities are already planned, with an all staff email in January 2019, to remind staff of the last update in November 2018 and upcoming committee meetings. Further internal and external communication will take place in February, including a press release as appropriate to communicate the Council's decision on 26 February 2019 and an article in the spring edition of *About Guildford*.

What	When	Who		Why	
Activity	Timing	Audience	Responsible	Objectives	Key messages
Specific Future Guildford all staff emails	Ongoing	All staff Cllrs	Managing Director (MD) or Communications and PR (Comms)	To keep staff and cllrs informed and up to date - Comms or the Comms Mgr to send information and general update emails. MD to send top level and direction emails or post on blog	
	2 Jul 18		MD	Introduce <i>Future Guildford</i> and show top level buy-in Explain and reassure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We cannot stand still • Why we need to change • Overall reorganisation • Stages and Ignite • How to get involved and how we will support you
	13 Jul 18		MD	Update and introduce MD's <i>Future Guildford</i> blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are working through Stage One • Thank you for first spreadsheet • I want to keep you updated • Ask any questions
	19 Jul 18		Communications and PR Manager (Comms Mgr)	Remind people where to get information and about Data Discovery Drop-in sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can get more info on Loop section, team email and blog • You can ask questions in different ways • We will keep you updated – look out for future updates.
	31 Aug 18		MD	Update about moving to stage two – Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for your hard work and involvement • There is scope for significant savings • More work to do – moving to next detailed stage • Careful consideration after Blueprint before any decision about next stage • We will keep you updated
	13 Nov 18		MD	Update about completion of Blueprint and outline and dates of committee meetings planned for February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for your hard work and involvement • Council needs to make decision to move to implementation - 26 February 2019 • More work to do – if move to next detailed stage • We will keep you updated and ask any questions

<p>MD's Future Guildford Blog</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All staff Cllrs</p>	<p>MD + Comms Mgr – Web Programme Manager publishes</p>	<p>Regular updates from MD to show top-level buy-in and give overall direction, with more personal and visual content.</p> <p>Links to it from <i>The Loop</i> home page, <i>Future Guildford</i> section and updates promoted in relevant all staff emails.</p> <p>First blog post – information update</p> <p><i>Our future – it's not all about the money</i> – to say a big thank you, explain what next and answer questions about savings and clarify financial position</p> <p><i>Important update about moving to the next stage</i> – based on MD all staff email on 31 August</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repeat introducing all staff email, information about workshops and links to presentations • We all need to work together to change and improve our organisation • Thank you for data discovery • The first part of stage one is now complete • I will take time to carefully review Ignite's findings • I will let you know my decision about next Blueprint stage asap • We face significant financial challenges • We need to improve and modernise our services, systems and customer care and make savings. • Thank you for your hard work and involvement • There is scope for significant savings • More work to do – moving to next detailed stage • Careful consideration after Blueprint before any decision about next stage • We will keep you updated
<p>MD's weekly all staff email</p>	<p>Weekly</p>	<p>All staff and Cllrs</p>	<p>MD</p>	<p>Item in relevant weekly updates to keep staff and cllrs informed and up to date</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will keep you updated • We need to work together to improve and modernise our services, systems and customer care and make savings

Future Guildford Loop Section	Ongoing	All staff and Cllrs	Future Guildford Team (FG Team) + Comms	General information source, drop-in session dates, presentations, guidance, other shared documents , link to blog and Future Guildford team contacts – can also get to it from the tab at the top of the Loop front page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promised open, clear and consistent communications • We all need to work together • We need your input and ideas
Face to face specific staff briefings or workshops	Ongoing	Groups or teams of staff	MD + FG Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted way to update staff on progress and ensure they know what to expect. • Show top level commitment and engage with key internal influencers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promised open, clear and consistent communications • We all need to work together • We need your input and ideas
	2 Jul 18	Senior Leaders briefing		To introduce and explain <i>Future Guildford</i> before it was introduced to all staff across the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all need to work together and show positive leadership to our teams • We cannot stand still and need to change • We need you to be involved and support your teams
	10 Jul 18	Service Reps workshop		Introducing the Opportunity and Focus Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all need to work together • We need your input and ideas
	Drop-in sessions	July 18		Series of informal drop-in sessions with FG Team and Ignite to answer any queries from service reps or others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promised open, clear and consistent communications and support through the stages
	13 Sep 18	Senior leaders briefing		Introducing the service challenges for the Blueprint stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all need to work together and show positive leadership to our teams • We cannot stand still and need to change • We need you to be involved and support your teams
	Sep – Oct 18	Senior leaders		Senior Leaders service challenge sessions, Service rep and other specific workshops, Councillor update sessions as part of detailed work for Blueprint stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all need to work together and show positive leadership to our teams • We cannot stand still and need to change • We all need to work together • We need your input and ideas

	Jan 2019 onwards	All staff	Tea with the MD	Monthly session for all staff – informal small group discussions of twelve colleagues to talk about new developments across the Council, share views, make suggestions or just talk about any issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promised open, clear and consistent communications • We all need to work together and show positive leadership to our teams • We cannot stand still and need to change • We need your input and ideas • How to get involved and how we will support you
Front page Loop news stories	Ongoing	All staff Cllrs	FG team + Comms	To keep staff and cllrs informed and up to date. Use Loop to promote blog and other updates – reminders of where to get info as necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promised open, clear and consistent communications • We will keep you updated
By the Wey	Ongoing Oct 18	All staff Cllrs	Comms	To keep staff and cllrs informed and up to date. Use By the Wey to promote blog and other updates – reminders of where to get info as necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promised open, clear and consistent communications • We will keep you updated
1:1 and team meetings	Ongoing	Individual or teams of staff	Line Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted way to update staff on progress and ensure they know what to expect. • Show commitment and engage with staff • To answer questions or point to ways to ask questions about <i>Future Guildford</i> and who can help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promised open, clear and consistent communications • We need your input and ideas • We all need to work together and show positive leadership to our teams • We need you to be involved and support your teams
About Guildford	Autumn edition	All residents, staff and	Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce <i>Future Guildford</i> externally and explain the reasons why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide a wide range of vital services that our communities rely on • We face significant funding challenges

		councillors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain long-term project • Reassure about service quality • MD's column focussing on detail, with cross reference from Leader's column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Future Guildford</i> transformation will help update and improve our systems and services and keep providing them to a very high standard • You can help us save by doing more online
Councillor specific sessions or Council meetings	Ongoing	Leader and Executive	MD + FG team	<p>The Leader of the Council has been involved and updated throughout the process.</p> <p>He was also involved, along with the Lead Councillor for Innovation and Transformation, in the service challenge sessions with senior leaders.</p> <p>Specific Ignite session with Executive cllrs</p>	
	27 Nov 18				
	Ongoing	Group leaders and all councillors		<p>The MD has kept updated as appropriate.</p>	
	21 Jan 19			<p>Specific Ignite workshop with all cllrs</p>	
	6 Feb 19			<p>Overview and Scrutiny meeting – invite to all cllrs</p>	
	19 Feb 19			<p>Executive committee meeting</p>	
	26 Feb 19			<p>Full Council meeting</p>	