

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Adopted at the Commonweal Housing Limited Board Meeting 08.03.10

Why a communications strategy?

1. For Commonweal a communications strategy is required to ensure that across the organisation there is consistent thinking and activity linked to getting the **'message' – the mission, ethos and vision** of the organisation across to a wider audience and securing the impact and replication of solutions on people's lives.
2. Key elements of the 5 year vision for Commonweal Housing set out in the future business strategy were making sure that the charity was:
 - **Visible** . more people will know and understand who we are, what we aim to do, how we do it and what our successes have been.
 AND
 - **Recognised brand** - as a kite mark for quality, tested projects.
3. Therefore for Commonweal the purpose of communications is purely to enhance the credibility of Commonweal Housing to help achieve those elements of our vision and especially ensuring that:
 - **Policy and decision makers** know who we are and value our views
 - **Funders** will support our activities
 - [communications] **Assist in replication** of projects and innovative solutions

Core elements of the communications strategy

4. Commonweal will have a **two pronged strategy**:
 - i. **Project specific communications**
 - This element of the strategy to be delivered via methods such as:
 - a. Maximising benefits from formal evaluation reports which will be published on our (and partners' websites) and distributed directly in full to relevant key contacts
 - b. Production of attractive summary version of report for wider circulation and lobbying
 - c. Replication at Federation conferences and seminars (e.g. the Re-Unite Federation)
 - d. Specific seminars and conferences
 - e. Seeking to secure editorial and feature coverage in relevant trade publications
 - f. Regular updates to Commonweal Housing website (following review and amendments to the site in 2010)
 - ii. **Communications to advance the causes and aims of the Charity** notably to demonstrate activity and momentum, enhance the credibility of the organisation and access a wider range of project interests
 - This element of the strategy to be delivered via methods such as:
 - a. Regular updates to Commonweal Housing website (following review and amendments to the site in 2010)
 - b. Regular press releases where possible
 - c. Seeking speaking opportunities
 - d. Display materials
 - e. Use of informal networking and profile raising opportunities by Chief Executive and all Trustees
 - Specific use of Chief Executive's Advisory Panel to help promote and widen the circle of friends of Commonweal.
 - Commonweal will also identify and use other technology based communications methods as appropriate such as social networking sites, text messaging etc.

Costs

5. Whilst much of the communications strategy can be achieved at little direct cost to the organisation other than officer (and Trustee) time . itself something that should not be undervalued . there are however key elements where direct costs may and probably will be incurred. These will include:
 - i. Commissioning professional writers / journalists to assist in producing summary evaluation reports
 - ii. Printing and distribution costs of hard copy publications
 - iii. Production of other display materials
 - iv. Conference / seminar venue costs
 - v. Potential hospitality costs when seeking to optimise informal networking opportunities such as lunches or dinners.
 - vi. Travel costs to attend conferences or other formal speaking opportunities
6. Commonweal Housing will seek wherever possible to secure appropriate specific sponsorship or other support in kind to minimise direct costs to the charity as and when it undertakes such activities.
7. Notwithstanding this Commonweal Housing recognises the importance for this charity of an effective communications strategy and delivery to maximise our effectiveness and achieve its learning and replication goals. Therefore it will ensure that adequate budgetary provision is made.