

Audit Findings & Management Action Plan

Finding 1

The Communications Strategy does not set out a clear vision and the action the council needs to take to achieve this. There is no evidence that the Communications Strategy has been approved and endorsed by service and senior management, or that the Strategy was presented to Members for their consideration and approval.

The Communications Strategy does not set out what actions the council needs to take, and by when, to ensure the core communications objectives (supporting the corporate plan and Exeter Vision) are achieved. In addition, it does not set out how the achievement of these actions will be monitored and who will take responsibility for ensuring their delivery.

There is no evidence that the Communications Strategy has been approved and endorsed by service and senior management. Equally, there is no evidence that the Strategy was presented to Members for their consideration and approval.

Action

Revise the Communications Strategy to clearly outline the vision and specific actions required to achieve the core communications objectives in support of the corporate plan and Exeter Vision.

Implement a formal approval process involving service and senior management, as well as presenting the Strategy to the Portfolio Holder for Communications for their consideration and approval, where necessary.

Additionally, establish a framework for monitoring the achievement of actions and assign clear responsibilities for their delivery.

Priority	1	SWAP Reference	AP#5815
Responsible Officer	Executive Officer Manager & Communications Manager		
Timescale	31 st August 2025		

Finding 2

There is no privacy notice that covers the activities undertaken by the Communications Team.

The Communications Team is currently not covered by a specific privacy notice outlining the data processing activities undertaken. This gap in privacy notice coverage poses a risk of non-compliance with data protection regulations.

Action

Develop and implement a privacy notice specifically outlining the data processing activities undertaken by the Communications Team. Ensure that the notice complies with data protection regulations and communicate it effectively to relevant stakeholders.

Priority	1	SWAP Reference	AP#5927
Responsible Officer	Executive Office Manager		
Timescale	28 th February 2025		

Finding 3

There is no evidence that the council has monitored its progress against the achievement of the core communications objectives, following the creation of the Communications Strategy.

The council's Communications Strategy outlines its core communications objectives. However, there is a lack of documented evidence demonstrating regular monitoring of progress against these objectives. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of the Strategy's implementation and the council's ability to measure the success of its communications efforts.

Action

Develop a formal monitoring and reporting process to track progress against the core communications objectives outlined in the Strategy. This should include regular assessments, documentation of key milestones, and performance metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the Communications Strategy.

Priority	2	SWAP Reference	AP#5846
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Responsible Officer	Executive Office Manager
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Timescale	31 st August 2025
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Finding 4

The Social Media Policy has not been reviewed since its creation in November 2023.

The Social Media Policy, created in November 2023, has not undergone any review or updates since its inception.

Some elements are missing from the Policy, e.g., monitoring the usage of social media accounts and when these could be closed, as well as the responsibilities of the administrators for service-run social media feeds. The Digital Lead has these changes in hand.

There is also no evidence that the policy has been approved by senior management.

Action

Initiate a comprehensive review of the Social Media Policy to identify and address any gaps or missing elements.

Incorporate provisions for monitoring social media account usage and define clear guidelines for administrators responsible for service-run social media feeds.

The updated policy should be approved by senior management and disseminated to all relevant personnel for awareness and compliance.

Priority	2	SWAP Reference	AP#5935
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Responsible Officer	Digital Lead
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Timescale	28 th February 2025
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Finding 5

There is no permanent storage folder for authorisations of new social media accounts.

There is currently no designated permanent storage folder for authorisations of new social media accounts. The lack of a dedicated storage location poses a risk to the security and proper documentation of the authorisation process.

Action

Create a designated permanent storage folder for the authorisation of new social media accounts. Ensure that all authorisations are documented, stored securely, and easily accessible for future reference and auditing purposes.

Priority	2	SWAP Reference	AP#5941
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Responsible Officer	Digital Lead
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Timescale	28 th February 2025
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Finding 6

There are 29 social media accounts that have been inactive for over six months.

We have identified 29 social media accounts that have been inactive for more than six months. These dormant accounts pose a risk to the council's online presence and should be reviewed for potential consolidation or removal.

Action

Carry out an exercise to review the inactive social media accounts with each responsible owner and assess their relevance to the council's strategic or service objectives. Consolidate or remove the dormant accounts to streamline and maintain an effective online presence.

Priority	2	SWAP Reference	AP#5991
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Responsible Officer	Digital Lead
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Timescale	30 th April 2025
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Finding 7

Members have not received media training since November 2022.

Media training for Members has not been conducted since November 2022.

Only eight of the current 39 Members attended the last training with only one Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council included within this number. This means that five portfolio holders have not received media training in the last three years.

This training is essential to ensure that Members are equipped to effectively engage with the media and communicate on behalf of the council.

Action

Schedule and conduct a comprehensive media training session for all Members, with mandatory attendance from portfolio holders and the Leader of the Council, to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills to effectively engage with the media and represent the council.

Refresher training will be provided to all Members on an annual basis.

Priority	2	SWAP Reference	AP#6015
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Responsible Officer	Communications Manager & Communications Officer
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Timescale	30 th June 2025
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Finding 8

Senior management do not receive any formal media training.

Whilst it is usual for portfolio holders or the Leader of the Council to speak on behalf of the council, senior management can occasionally be expected to provide interviews, quotes or statements to the press.

In our audit review, we have identified that senior management do not receive any formal media training. This raises potential concerns about their preparedness to handle media inquiries and public communication effectively.

Action

Develop and implement a comprehensive media training program for senior management to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively handle media inquiries and public communication.

Regular refresher courses should also be scheduled to ensure continuous readiness.

Priority	2	SWAP Reference	AP#6019
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Responsible Officer	Communications Manager
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Timescale	30 th June 2025
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Finding 9

The record of corporate social media accounts includes limited information.

The current record of social media accounts provides the name of the social media account, the approved users, the platform on which it has been set up and whether the account is dormant or active.

Additional information could be added to provide a more comprehensive record, for example:

- Directorate
- Purpose of the Account
- Expected Outcomes
- Date of Last Post
- Authorising Manager

Action

Enhance the record of social media accounts by including the additional details. This will provide a more comprehensive and informative record for effective oversight and management of social media activities.

Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#6000
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Responsible Officer	Digital Lead
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Timescale	31 st March 2025
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Finding 10

The council has not undertaken any surveys in recent years to gain feedback from the readers of Exeter Citizen on its effectiveness.

The council has not conducted any surveys in recent years to gather feedback from Exeter Citizen readers regarding the publication's effectiveness. This lack of feedback poses a risk in terms of understanding the publication's impact and meeting the needs of its audience.

Action

Develop a comprehensive survey to gather feedback from Exeter Citizen readers on the publication's effectiveness.

Utilise multiple channels, such as online platforms and printed materials, to reach a wide audience.

Analyse the feedback to identify areas for improvement and ensure alignment with readers' needs and expectations.

Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#6022
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Responsible Officer	Communications Manager
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Timescale	30 th September 2025
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