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## Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

### Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions)

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010

Subject: Communications, Report Writing and Plain English

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the October 2009 meeting of the Board, Members discussed with Andy Carter (Acting Head of Communications) and Alex White (Communications Manager, Strategic Communications and Marketing) the standard and style of written reports issued by the Council, both to external partners and internally between officers and Elected Members.
- 1.2 Members also discussed some of the issues experienced by the Corporate Communications Team, the initiatives and training that has been developed to address them, and helped shape the future standard and style of communications within the Council.
- 1.3 In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:-
- The poor use of English and the over-use of jargon, officialese and acronyms in Council correspondence, publications and reports, often to the detriment of the intended aim of the document;
  - The need to be customer-focused when considering the method and content of communication from the Council, and above all, the need to communicate as plainly and simply as possible;
  - The imminent launch of a free, on-line Plain English training course as part of a high level campaign being co-ordinated by the Council's Corporate Communications Team.
- 1.4 The Board asked that officers attend today's meeting to provide an update.

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## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members of the Board are asked to discuss issues around this agenda item and make any appropriate recommendations.

### Background Papers

None used