

<b>Report to:</b>	QSMTM
<b>Report by:</b>	Claire Stephen, Acting Head of Policy and Information (HOPI)
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	12 May 2021
<b>Subject/ Title:</b> (and VC no)	2021-22 Communication Strategy Performance Report (VC169465)
<b>Attached Papers</b> (title and VC no)	Scottish Information Commissioner's Communication Strategy 2015-20 (VC127998)

## Purpose of report

---

1. To provide the annual report of performance in 2021-2022 against the measures in the Scottish Information Commissioner's ('the Commissioner') Communication Strategy 2015-2020 (the 2015-2020 Strategy), in line with the Commissioner's governance reporting arrangements.

## Recommendation and actions

---

2. It is recommended that:
  - (i) The Senior Management Team (SMT) notes the contents of this report
  - (ii) This report is published in full as set out in the publication section of this report.

## Executive summary

---

3. This document reports on the Commissioner's progress during 2021-22 in relation to communication activity, measured against the three performance measures contained in the Strategy 2015-2020 (as updated in November 2019).
4. The Commissioner's 2021-2024 Communication & Engagement Framework was approved in the final quarter of 2021-22. Given the timing of this approval, measures set out in the 2015-2020 Strategy were used to measure and guide activity in this area across 2021-22.
5. There are four measures listed:
  - (i) A minimum of 40% of all applications to be received via the online application portal
  - (ii) A 20% increase by 2020 in the number of absolute unique website visits (from 54,000 to 64,800)
  - (iii) Increase in number of annual impressions\* on Twitter (to 450,000 in 2020)
  - (iv) Increase in numbers of subscribers to emails

\*Impressions: Times a user is served a Tweet in timeline or search results
6. During 2021-22, as a consequence of technical issues, our applications portal was removed from our website. Consequently, measure (i) is now obsolete. Applications to the Commissioner continue to be supported through alternative routes, initial figures suggest that removal of the portal has had limited impact on the volume or validity of new applications received.

7. A review of 2020-21 communications performance against the three remaining measures show that two of the three measures have been achieved.
8. As identified in the 2019-2020 report, the nature and focus of communications activity has changed since the Communications Strategy 2015-2020 was developed, and a number of essential tools (such as the website) have become less effective in their current form. As a result, the 2021-2024 Communications and Engagement Framework takes a new and updated approach, building on learning and refined requirements.

### 2021-22 Performance: against 2015-20 strategy measures

Measures:	Status	Final performance
<b>M1.</b> A minimum of 40% of all applications to be received via the online application portal	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>M2.</b> A 20% increase by 2020 in the number of absolute unique website visits (from 54,000 to 64,800)	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>86,000</b> <b>34% increase</b> <b>between years and</b> <b>59% increase from</b> <b>54,000 baseline</b>
<b>M3.</b> Increase in number of annual impressions on Twitter (to 450,000 in 2020)	<b>Not achieved</b>	<b>121,042</b> <b>impressions</b>
<b>M4.</b> Increase in numbers of subscribers to emails	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>525</b>

### Performance in detail

#### Measure 2: A 20% increase in the number of absolute unique website visits (from 54,000 to 64,800)

##### *Performance against this measure*

9. This measure required a 20% increase in the number of absolute unique website visits from the 2015 baseline figure of 54,000, and as set out in the 2016-2020 Communications Strategy. This was not achieved within the lifespan of the 2016-2020 Communications Strategy, where, as reported previously, a 10.5% increase was achieved.
10. Over the course of 2021-22 this measure has **been achieved**. Analytic data (VC152144) shows that there has been significant progress against this objective over the course of the year.
11. Data for 2021-22 shows that there were 86,800 absolute unique website visits over 2021-22, which represents a 59% increase on the 2015 baseline figure. While the objective was not achieved, within the timeframe of our existing strategy, the significant increase in website users over the course of 2021-2022 serves to highlight the importance of our website as our primary communication tool.

Year	2015 baseline	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Visits</b>	<b>54,000</b>	54,979	52,839	53,156	59,674	64,231	86,800
<b>% change against 2015 baseline</b>		1.8%	2.1%	1.5%	10.5%	18.9%	34%

### *General notes on performance*

12. During 2021-22, there was a sustained increase in user activity. Other than the launch of the Open Update in December 2020, which has helped to drive traffic to the website, there does not appear to be any single event or action that has driven this increase.
13. Our top pages remain relatively static throughout the year and consisted of:
  - (i) Home page
  - (ii) Briefings and Guidance
  - (iii) Your Rights
  - (iv) Public Authorities
  - (v) Law and Legislation
  - (vi) Decisions
14. The age and accessibility of our old website undoubtedly impacted on user experiences. The dated structure, 'busy' display, accessibility issues and lack of focus on user 'journeys' and issues with effective display on smartphones and tablets all had a detrimental impact on user experiences. These issues have, however, been addressed (with the exception of some accessibility issues related to content delivery) in the development of our new website.

### *Communications activity under consideration for 2021-22:*

15. The continued publication of monthly newsletters, promotion of dynamic content (including articles, FOI case studies, commentary, etc) and implementation of changes to respond to will continue to drive improvements, traffic and enhance user experiences and engagement.

### **Measure 3: Increase in number of annual impressions on Twitter (to 450,000 in 2020)**

#### *Performance against this measure*

16. Impressions are measured as the number of times posts on Twitter have been seen by other Twitter users. While the 2015-2020 impressions target was exceeded last year, with 502,600 annual impressions achieved in 2019-20, 2020-21 saw a significant drop in the number of impressions achieved, to 177,091. This drop continued throughout 2021-22 to 121,042. As a result, during 2020-21 this measure **was not achieved**.
17. Our engagement rate (the number of engagements divided by the number of impressions) is excellent, ending the year at 3.2%. Anything above 0.5% is considered to be a good engagement rate, with anything above 1% to be excellent). This suggests that our Tweets are of good quality.

	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
<b>Twitter impressions:</b>	502,600	177,091	121,042
<b>Number of tweets issued:</b>	338	154	229

#### *Factors affecting performance*

18. Although the number of tweets increased in 2021-22, there was still a decline in the number compared to 2019-20. However, we continue to gather new followers (96 in 2021-22). The

reduction in impressions would indicate we have a number of inactive followers or we need to review the timing of our Tweets.

19. The continued impact of the pandemic contributed to a reduced capacity and fewer opportunities to develop and issue tweets, along with less time to innovate in the development of twitter campaigns.
20. In addition, it is also worth noting that a single event significantly drove an increase in impressions in 2019-20, with the advertisement of a senior management team vacancy leading to 243,800 impressions during Q2 of that year. Although no equivalent event took place during 2020-21, recruitment is planned for 2022-23.
21. Top tweets of 2021-22:
  - (i) New Website
  - (ii) SPIF
  - (iii) Festive period FOI timescales
  - (iv) Holyrood conference
  - (v) Annual report
  - (vi) Give them time campaign
  - (vii) Stats promo
  - (viii) CFI (case studies)

*Communications activity under consideration for 2020-21:*

22. The 2021-2024 Communications & Engagement Framework will aim to focus emphasis on engagement and interaction, as opposed to impressions, e.g. by focussing on engagement rate with Tweets (along with content on any other approved social medial channels utilised).

#### **Measure 4: Increase in numbers of ‘subscribers’ to our emails**

##### *Performance*

23. The Commissioner’s new ‘Open Update’ email newsletter and the associated development of a subscriber list launched in December 2020. Following the creation of service, the subscriber list has grown to 525 subscribers, with 304 new subscribers in 2021-22 alone, representing a 140% increase.
24. While, therefore, no specific target for an increase in subscribers has been set, the basic metric to increase our subscribers can be considered to have been **achieved** through the successful development and delivery of the newsletter and accompanying subscriber list.

*Communications activity under consideration for 2020-21:*

25. We plan to continue to issue 6-12 newsletters across the course of 2021-22, highlighting key areas of FOI policy, practice and guidance for recipients. We will use social media, the website, and engagement through networking, conferences and events to continue to promote the newsletter, and stimulate growth in subscriber numbers. The reduction in number of issues is due to immediate resource constraints.

## **Risk impact**

---

26. The risks associated with non-delivery of a communication strategy or framework are recognised in existing risk management frameworks, and relevant mitigations set out.
27. The new Communications and Engagement Framework for 2021-24 takes in to account those issues not addressed as a result of the 2015-2020 Communications Strategy, and learning arising from this, as well as ensuring it will effectively support delivery of the Commissioner's Strategic Plan 2020-2024.

## **Equalities impact**

---

28. No new specific equalities impact identified by this report. The 2021-2024 Communications & Engagement Framework considered any relevant equalities impacts.

## **Privacy impact**

---

29. No new privacy impacts are identified or arising from this report (those relating to elements such as the new email newsletter service have been explored in the relevant development projects).

## **Resources impact**

---

30. The resources for delivering the Communication Strategy are met through planned resources. There are no new impacts highlighted in this report which will not be addressed elsewhere (e.g. for future strategy or projects to be discussed further as Senior Management Team – such as potential new website).

## **Operational/ strategic plan impact**

---

31. Evidence presented in this report and data leading to it, has informed the development of the 2021-2024 Communications & Engagement Framework. This will address how communications performance relevant to new strategic and operational priorities will be improved where required, and how successes will be built upon.

## **Records management impact (including any key documents actions)**

---

32. None identified.

## **Consultation and Communication**

---

33. This report has been prepared in consultation with the relevant members of the Policy and Information Team, and communications performance data contained within it is considered each month in Policy and Information Team meetings.
34. This report will be published on the Commissioner's website.

## **Publication**

---

35. I recommend that this committee report is published in full.