



Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee
30 April 2014

Review of central and directorate communications functions

Purpose of the report:

To provide the committee with an outline of how the communications service supports the organisation through the communications and engagement strategy, and to demonstrate how the reduction in spending will be achieved in 2014/15.

1. Introduction

2. This report outlines how the communications service supports the organisation and how it is structured to provide that support in the most effective way. It also demonstrates how communications is reducing spend and delivering value for money.
3. The council's communications and engagement strategy sets the framework for all communications activity.
4. The strategy's aim is to be clear and focused and to involve residents and communities in our communications and engagement. We have a commitment to providing the best communications and engagement while delivering value for money for Surrey residents. There is an emphasis on innovative approaches and being proactive.
5. All communications activity fits into three broad areas:
 - **Providing information** – increasing awareness of services and issues through a variety of channels, explaining decisions and policies using spokespeople as appropriate, providing details of how and where to access services and information about events and activities.
 - **Supporting changes in behaviour** – examples: encouraging people to become foster parents, increasing recycling, advice on living independently for older and vulnerable adults, improving health.
 - **Engaging people in changes** – examples, seeking views on changes to services, new policies and ways of delivering services and activity.
6. To reflect the focus on residents and communities our communications and engagement activity is focused on supporting residents, directly or indirectly, in these three broad areas of activity.

7. Communications across the council

8. The centre of expertise for communications is the council's communications service. The service leads on setting guidelines and standards, working with communications professionals across the organisation. As a result of collaboration, from the start of the financial year 2014/15 there will be a single forward plan based on the organisation's priorities, outlined in the corporate strategy, and a pooled budget for the council, managed by communications representatives from the service and directorates.
9. In total there are the equivalent of 42.5 full time roles (plus two apprentices) providing communications and engagement for the organisation. Of these roles 20.5 are in the communications service and 22.5 are based in directorates.
10. This includes a mixture of full time communications professionals and individuals who have elements of communications as part of their roles.

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Directorate	Headcount (full time equivalents)
Communications Service	20.5 + apprentice
Adult Social Care	5 + apprentice (not yet appointed)
Children Schools & Families	5.3 + apprentice (includes 0.5 post for CAMHs based in central comms)
Children, Schools & Families – Early Years	3.4
Customers & Communities	4.2
Environment & Infrastructure	4.1 (*estimate across different posts includes 2 posts based in central comms)
Business Services	0 - fully supported by comms service
Chief Executive's Office	0 - fully supported by comms service

Central communications service

11. The structure of the central communications service reflects the emphasis on resident communications and the approach outlined in the communications and engagement strategy. The service has four discipline teams who work to provide information, support changes in behaviour and engage people in change. The 20.5 posts are made up as follows:
12. Campaign communications – 6.5 posts

Oversee and deliver activity to provide information and help promote and engage people in changes to behaviour. Examples include campaigns to recruit more foster carers and adoptive parents, increase recycling and reuse, improve behaviour and safety of road users, promote health and wellbeing, promote independent living for vulnerable adults, raise awareness of key services as well as production of residents' magazine, Surrey Matters.

13. Brand and design – 4 posts

Design and produce all materials for the council, including posters, adverts and all campaign materials. Examples include designing and producing new branding for libraries, design of new website homepage, partnership design and brand work, for example Surrey Hubs, Drive Smart. They also generate income by selling design work to other councils, such as the Eat Out Eat Well healthy eating campaign.

14. Internal communications – 3 posts

All organisation-wide staff communications, which includes HR and OD activity - for example: pay, my benefits, staff performance and appraisals. Work with directorate communications teams to co-ordinate and target messages.

15. Media and public affairs – 5 posts

All media activity for the organisation – national, trade and local. Managing the virtual press office and social media activity for journalists.

Directorate communications

16. Directorate communications activity (22.5 posts) also primarily focuses on residents, service users, stakeholders and staff and provide information, support changes in behaviour and engage people in change.

17. Directorates have taken different approaches to delivering communications – these include: dedicated communications roles within directorates; roles that have communications as one part of a role's activities; and dedicated communications roles funded by directorates but based in the central communications service.

18. Directorate communications activity again varies but in general tends to focus on service user engagement, stakeholder and partner engagement and internal directorate communications.

19. The Communications Review has brought the central and directorate communications teams together to work more effectively for residents.

One team working

From		To
Separate teams across the council	➔	Co-ordinated joint approach
Separate comms plans and priorities	➔	Single forward plan for all activity based on priorities, developed and agreed by all : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Comms & engagement strategy- Corporate strategy and directorate priorities
Resource works separately across organisation unco-ordinated approach	➔	Pooled budget Resources and budget allocated jointly Joined-up campaigns – resource from appropriate teams working together
Roles focused on directorate/corporate need	➔	Common understanding and buy in for maximum effectiveness around organisation's priorities

Improving communications & engagement

From		To
Unco-ordinated activity and quality	➔	One comms and engagement strategy Framework and guidelines to provide consistency <ul style="list-style-type: none">- brand guidelines- self serve tools and templates
Patchy objective setting and evaluation of Effectiveness	➔	Shared data, audience / insight
Website unrelated to communications and engagement activity for residents	➔	Clearer website, reinforcing main campaigns and activity
Separate data and limited knowledge sharing	➔	Evaluation of all activity – around clear Objectives. Outcome focused

Budget

20. To support the strategy's commitment to greater clarity, focus and value for money there will be a single budget and forward plan for communications and engagement for the new financial year.
21. The pooled budget for 2014/15 for spend on materials (non-staffing) across the organisation is £723k compared to £1,185k in the baseline year 2012/13. A reduction of around a third. The reduction will be achieved by a greater focus of activity around priorities, a reduction in duplication and increase in productivity, less spend on advertising, printing and other paid-for activity and an increased use of digital activity.

22. Over the coming year communications will continue to work with services across the organisation to realise further savings, including supporting Business Services to achieve £500k of savings on office printing..

23. **Communications spending centrally and by directorate for 2014/15, with additional external funding based on the latest figures (2012/13)**

Directorate	Spend for 2014/15	External funding (2012/13)	Potential total
Adult Social Care	£68k	£30k	£98k
Business Services	£47.5k	n/a	£47.5k
Chief Executive's	£9k	n/a	£9k
Children's, Schools Families	£161k	£28k	£189k
Customers & Communities	£45.5k	£170k	£215.5k
Env & Infrastructure	£124k	£229k	£353k
TOTAL	£455k	£457k	£912k
Central communications	£268k	n/a	£268k
TOTAL	£723	£457	£1,180k

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Communications Review Maximise resource

From

To

Individual budgets, no common understanding of resource or spend



Single pooled and reduced budget, jointly agreed and allocated

Heavy use of printed material not evaluated



New agreed approaches, less paid-for activity
Optimise digital, other formats to meet needs, evaluated effectiveness

No common organisation-wide view of spend



Clear picture of spend, enabling savings

300+ vendors used ad hoc not maximising value



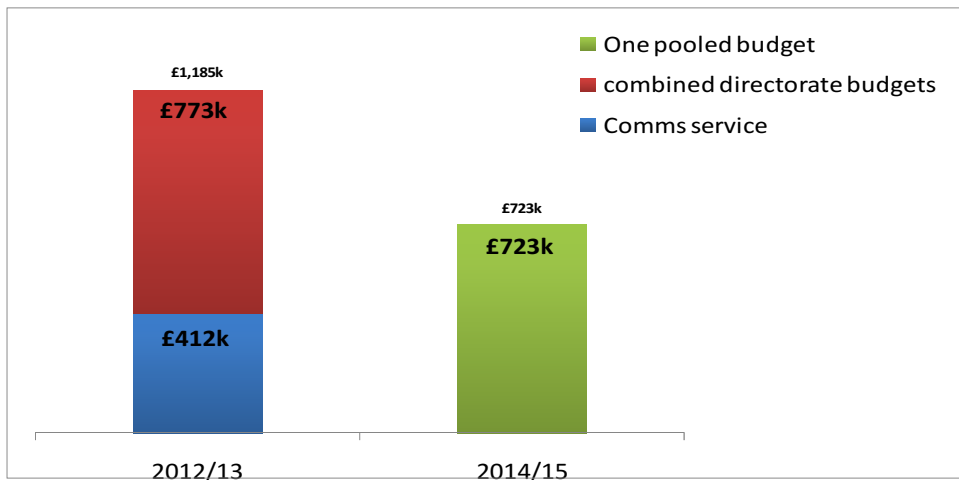
100 vendors, better deals, clear view of spend, vendors shared

Disparate use of channels across organisation



Effective pool of channels

Communications Review Maximise resource



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24. In addition to the identified budgets, historically approximately £400k per year has been spent by directorates on communications from externally sourced grant funding. Communications is introducing a consistent approach for use of such funding that ensures consistency of quality and value for money. The recommended approach models Environment & Infrastructure's current best practice - ie resource and/or funding for materials are identified when bidding for external funds. If a post is required it is based in the communications service. A ring-fenced budget for activity is established from the grant funding. Working with the communications service offers support and access to resources and expertise to provide high quality and effective communications.
25. There will also be a change to the level of financial support for income generating services from the communications budgets. To ensure communications activity is cost neutral to the council, services with established income generation streams will be expected to cover their communications and marketing activity from their income.
26. The communications and engagement strategy supports delivery of the corporate strategy – the council's commitment to its residents. Communications is integral to its success and to support and raise awareness of the priorities outlined in the strategy.

Delivery of communications and engagement

27. The focus of communications activity is ensuring residents are informed and engaged about the services and activity that the organisation defines as its priorities. An important part of this is supporting Members and officers with effective and good value communications and engagement.
28. An evaluation of performance against the priorities in the communications and engagement strategy is attached.

29. The approach to delivering savings outlined should be achievable and should not reduce the effectiveness of communications and engagement – nor limit its ability to support the organisation in delivering changes to services.

30. Conclusions:

31. The Select Committee is being asked to endorse the new approach and activity to embed a common management, planning and budgetary framework for communications across the organisation.

32. Recommendations:

33. Budgets

34. A £493k reduction in communications and related spending is achieved in 2014/15 as follows:

- £389k cashable savings
- £92k in cost avoidance through outsourced services (ie income generating services are now cost neutral to the organisation)
- £12k in cost avoidance on statutory notices advertising.

The communications service is supporting business services through a behaviour change campaign to realise a further £500k savings to reach the £1m target. There will be savings around office printing (£100,000 in 2014/15, rising to £500,000 in 2015/16) and council postage (savings to be quantified when financial analysis complete).

35. There is a consistent approach for use of grant funding for communications that ensures consistency of quality and value for money. The recommended approach models Environment & Infrastructure's current best practice

36. Income-generating services ensure that the cost of marketing or communications activity is reflected in their pricing so they do not add to the council's communications costs.

37. Ways of working

38. The Communications Service continues to bring together the communications service and directorate teams to work as one team to maximise productivity and resource.

39. That no further communications posts (whole or part) or budgets are created in the council without the agreement of the Head of Communications.

40. The pooled communications budget is jointly managed on a one team basis by the Communications Service and managers representing the communications functions council-wide.

41. Next steps:

Continue to embed the actions of the communications review and implement the above recommendations.

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Sources/background papers:

Communications and engagement strategy

Breakdown of spend and roles

Evaluation of communications activity

Benchmarking data (to follow)