

PLANNING OUR FUTURE - ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corporate communication has been identified as one of two areas of the Council's work in which additional investment will benefit the overall aims of the Single Outcome Agreement to grow the population and create jobs. The other area is Economic Development.

This report sets out proposals for proportionate investment in the team, which will bring the maximum impact for the least cost. The proposal is for two additional communication officers. The report explains how this investment would provide required support for key council objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Policy and Resources Committee agrees that the proposals for two additional communication officers are presented for consideration by Council on 22 October at a cost of £76k per annum.

PLANNING OUR FUTURE ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCE

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Corporate communication has been identified as one of two areas of the Council's work in which additional investment will benefit the overall aims of the Single Outcome Agreement to grow the population and create jobs. The other area is Economic Development.
- 1.2 This report sets out proposals for proportionate investment in the team, which will bring the maximum impact for the least cost. The proposal is for two additional communication officers. The report explains how this investment would provide required support for key council objectives.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Policy and Resources Committee agrees that the proposals for two additional communication officers are presented for consideration by Council on 22 October.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 Argyll and Bute Council's need for proactive corporate communication support is growing.
- 3.2 The aims of the Single Outcome Agreement - to attract people and jobs to the area - require communication/promotion to demonstrate confidence in our local economy, to reach and influence potential investors, workers, visitors and residents or to develop and maintain ambassadors for the area; and promotion of the achievements of the Council in developing opportunities and reasons to live, work, invest in and visit Argyll and Bute.
- 3.3 Transformational change – such as the planning our future process – needs on-going communication with employees to inform and encourage involvement in making change successful. It requires communication with the public to explain challenges and choices made by the Council.
- 3.4 Effective and improving service delivery will benefit from sustained communication and promotion of the Council and its reputation in order for example to attract talented employees by demonstrating the council as an employer of choice, by encouraging employees to be ambassadors for the Council or by supporting income generating services.

- 3.5 Increasing customer satisfaction with the Council requires increased communication; for example involvement in decision-making through growing numbers of consultations requires communication to encourage participation and to provide feedback on use of responses in decisions made.

Capacity of current communications team

- 3.6 The communications team is small, in comparison to demand for support and potential for progress.
- 3.7 The team consists of one manager, three communication officers and one communication assistant. It provides press office support for 7+ local media outlets, graphic design advice and support and a wide range of internal and external communication activities supporting service delivery and the reputation of the council.
- 3.8 As a comparison, West Dunbartonshire Council has a similar population, 3 local papers and a team of 1 manager, 3 press officers, a marketing officer and graphic designer.
- 3.9 Communications resources are identified as an issue in the communications audit carried out by an external agency. Increasing capacity is one of the recommendations.
- 3.10 A number of actions for progress have been identified, but implementation of these has been limited by limited resources, for example:
- On-line newsroom: proposals being developed to extend accessibility and reach of information on business and other opportunities in Argyll and Bute, as part of supporting the aim to attract more people and jobs to the area.
 - Internal communication: proposals in place to better provide employees with information required to support effective transformation of the Council and its work.
 - Communications Strategy being developed that will cover digital, internal, media, partnership communication, branding and design, based on a proactive approach. Actions to be matched to resources to implement.
- 3.11 Action has been taken to ensure best use of existing communication team resources, for example:
- Communication officers are aligned to individual Directorates to build knowledge of and therefore in-put to service delivery
 - Rota system introduced for communications officers to focus on proactive communication

- Role of communication assistant being developed in supporting growth of social media communication.
- Proposal (in Appendix 1) to create temporary post of graphic designer, from existing resources.

3.11 Argyll and Bute is in competition with other areas across Scotland to attract employees, residents, visitors and business investors. Without additional communication resources:

- Achieving key council objectives will be hindered by lack of communication support.
- Building confidence in the area's economy, and awareness of the opportunities that exist here, will not be maximised through for example strong promotion of the Council's significant regeneration investment.
- Recruitment and retention of talented staff, to deliver effective and improving services for our communities, will become an increasing challenge.

3.12 Proposals for increased resources focus on:

- Taking advantage of the reach offered by on-line channels to better inform our communities of council news relevant to them, and to make available information to potential investors, businesses, residents and visitors.
- Switching balance of communication to proactive from reactive in order to support service delivery, develop the benefits a positive reputation can have for an organisation's performance, and support achievement of Council Single Outcome Objectives.
- Developing support for employees, through effective communication, in delivering change
- Developing the Council as a broadcaster of its own news and reducing reliance on the (mis) interpretation of third parties
- Supporting effective implementation of Council decisions and initiatives, for example Economic Development's marketing activity or income generating projects.

3.13 It is proposed to create two additional communication officer posts to carry out roles outlined in Appendix 1, at a cost of £76,000 per annum.

3.14 If approved, these roles would be available for employees, whose posts are at risk of redundancy, to apply for, as employees will have been made aware of this risk at the time advertising.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 The Council's need for proactive communication is increasing. Ideas are in place for progressing the service delivered by the Communications Team to match the business need of the Council, however current resources limit

or put on hold implementing them. Increasing communication resources would increase the positive impact the Team could have for customers, employees and the objectives of the Council.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy - none
- 5.2 Financial – two additional posts would cost £76,000 per annum
- 5.3 Legal - none
- 5.4 HR - none
- 5.5 Equalities - none
- 5.6 Risk – The Council's objectives will lack support if its communication resources do not match business need.
- 5.7 Customer Service – increasing communication output will support customer service through a time of change.

Douglas Hendry

Executive Director of Customer Services

Further information:

Jane Jarvie, Communications Manager, 01546 604323

Appendix 1: Proposal for increased resources in the Communications Team