Best Value Review

External Communications

Final Vision & Improvement Plan

December 2002

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SECTION ONE - FINAL VISION

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

Three of the characteristics of a fully effective local authority, as defined by the IDeA in its Local Government Improvement Programme relate to the role played by communications. According to the IDeA, a fully effective local authority should:

- Operate as a corporate entity, recognising and demonstrating the inter-relationship between all of the authority's activities and services, and work with other government agencies and voluntary organisations to ensure 'seamlessness' for service users wherever practical;
- Encourage a highly participative democracy with close and regular contact between the authority and local people, both as service users and citizens, develop a vision and strategy for the well-being of the area through participation of the community, and educate and raise public awareness about significant issues;
- Be well-regarded by the public and have high local impact.

The Project Board for this Best Value review of external communications in Southwark identified four core aims for the communications function:

- establishing and promoting the reputation of Southwark Council;
- supporting the council's community leadership role;
- promoting, and informing people about council services;
- and developing the use of new technology.

Reputation

For local authorities, managing the reputation of the organisation is becoming increasingly important. The review has examined the degree to which external communications can improve the perception of the authority as a service provider and community leader with its audiences and customers. Improving the reputation of the authority covers a range of aspects:

- Developing a more transparent and accessible view of the authority and promoting a better understanding among local people of value for money and openness;
- Creating a higher profile for the Council as a dynamic, efficient and business-like organisation at a local, regional and national level;
- Promoting Southwark as a leading London borough;
- Building recognition of Southwark as an example of best practice and position the council as the first point of contact for journalists seeking an informed opinion on key municipal or social issues.

Community Leadership

'Councils are not just providers and enablers of essential services, they also have a key role as community leaders, fostering debate, articulating a vision and acting as advocates for their communities'.
Modern Councils, Modern Services, Access for All' - DTLR, 2001

The Local Government Act 2000 creates a new discretionary power for principal local authorities in England and Wales to do anything they consider likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area. This power forms an important part of the modernisation of local government programme which is designed to ensure that:

- Councils are empowered to lead their communities;
- Councils' political decision-making processes are efficient, transparent and accountable;
- There is continuous improvement in the efficiency and quality of the services for which councils are responsible;
- Councils actively involve and engage local people in local decisions and;

- Councils have the powers they need to ensure that they can promote and improve the well-being of their areas and contribute to sustainable development.

Effective two-way communications between the council, local people and other stakeholders is fundamental to each of these activities. Communications plays a key role in supporting partnerships and other community relationships. It is also a key tool in developing the Council's ability to attract external funding and inward investment to achieve economic and social regeneration.

Communicating details about council services

Consultation with local people during the course of this review has highlighted information about council services as a major priority for residents and service users. The findings show that 92% of people would find contact numbers of council services useful, and 84% would find information on what each council service provides useful. This supports the earlier findings of the Best Value review of Public Access.

New Technology

Developing electronic delivery of services and information is a key objective for all local authorities, not only to meet central government targets, but also to meet a growing demand. The internet is increasingly important, not only as a source of information, but also as a mechanism to interact with the authority and access its services.

However, in Southwark, as across the country, only a section of the population has access to on-line services and therefore the challenge is to develop an appropriate balance of electronic and traditional communications channels to satisfy local needs.

1.2   Scope of the Review

Definition of Communications

For the purposes of this review, we have broken down and defined different aspects of communications as follows:

Media relations   proactive and responsive press and PR activities with local, regional, national, trade and specialist print and broadcast media; this includes media enquiries, crisis / bad news management, press releases and statements, and management of launches, events, ministerial and other VIP visits

Marketing & publicity   proactive campaigns designed to deliver a specific message or promote a particular service or activity; such campaigns should focus clearly on consideration of target audience, core message / motivation, core 'offer', appropriateness of marketing channels, effectiveness of distribution / reach and feedback mechanism to measure impact and success; typically they will be executed with significant support from external design agencies, and draw upon the detailed service knowledge of professional staff

Publications   production of regular newsletters, magazines, guides and annual reviews, as well as the statutory publications which the council is required to produce (such as the Best Value Performance Plan, Housing Investment Programme etc)

New media   electronic channels of communication, including web, intranet and kiosks.

Functions & roles

This council-wide Best Value review of external communications includes the work of the core communications unit and departmental communications functions.

The core communications unit is responsible for:
- all reactive and proactive media relations,
- crisis management,
- devising and implementing marketing and publicity campaigns,

- organising launches and events,
- leading on corporate publications (including residents' magazine Southwark Life),
- maintaining and developing the council's web-site
- managing the use of the council's corporate identity,
- advising COT and members on communications issues in their respective roles as the strategic management body, and the political leadership of the Council, and
- media training.

The range of duties of departmental communications officers (where they exist) varies but includes, for example:
- marketing of individual services,
- promotional campaigns,
- production of newsletters and leaflets.

The review has also looked at the devolved communications responsibilities of Business Unit Managers across the authority and the independent communications activity generated at a localised service level as a result. It has sought to identify ways in which this localised activity might be integrated into a comprehensive council-wide communications strategy. Greater consistency in communications resourcing at a departmental level, and in the professional relationship between departmental and central communications functions has also been addressed.

Quality & cost

The review set out to assess whether the council is receiving a quality, cost effective service and to recommend a way forward that enables the authority to fulfil its role granted by central government while addressing local needs. Performance measures and cost information have been addressed wherever possible (although these are generally in their infancy across local government) and benchmarked against a range of comparator organisations, both from local government and other sectors.

This review was not designed to address the issues of internal communications or customer service/public access – which was the subject of an earlier review process – although the recommendations of the review may have implications for the implementation of public access improvements and a future internal communications strategy.

Culture & prioritisation

The culture of the authority in relation to external communications - for example the corporate priority given to effective and open communications between the council and local people, and the culture in which the communications function operates - was raised during internal consultation. The review has attempted, through benchmarking, to look at the lead taken by members and senior officers and at attitudes to communications in other organisations.

Structure & delivery options

The structure of external communications functions across the authority has also been examined as part of the review. Strengths and weaknesses of the current structure for delivering external communications have been explored to identify improved ways of managing communications. Alternative delivery methods have also been examined (although these are very limited in terms of practical working examples) and best practice gathered from other local authorities.

2. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS FROM CHALLENGE, CONSULT & COMPARE

2.1 Challenge

The Interim Members Challenge Panel identified a series of key issues and these are outlined below (the Interim Challenge document is attached at Appendix 1):

Corporate strategy and ownership
- There is an absence of integration and consistency across external communications activities (ie corporate branding, key messages, marketing approach);
- A strategic approach to communications is required – which builds on current strengths, incorporates forward planning and includes clear end objectives;
- There is a need for clearer definition of key messages, reinforcement of these via branding, and better forward planning on how they are communicated externally;
- Given the council's Community Leadership role, two-way communication should be fundamental to what we do;
- Effective communications is not given a sufficiently high priority within the organisation.

Service options and organisation
- Expenditure on communications appears to be high; the review must establish overall expenditure and produce proposals for its most effective and efficient use;
- At the same time, communications budgets must not be used as easy targets for cuts if this undermines the delivery of the overall strategy
- A range of options needs to be considered to identify how external communications can be most effectively and efficiently managed.

Performance management and information
- Comparative information on performance and the application of resources is required
- Greater clarity is required about the level of overall spend and the options for using it most effectively
- Consideration needs to be given to the range of skills needed for staff and elected members to communicate effectively
- Clarity about the degree to which external communications can influence public perception is equally important
- Need to understand what constitutes successful communication, and identify how to achieve consistency and sharing of best practice across the council.

2.2 Consult

Significant data already existed on aspects of external communications, however to ensure that the consultation approach adopted was timely, up to date and comprehensive, the following consultation programme was undertaken:
- Communications Audit (conducted by an independent Communications Consultant)
- Survey of journalists
- 4 focus groups involving council staff
- postal questionnaire to corporate and departmental communications staff
- postal questionnaire to business managers
- postal questionnaire to members
- depth interviews with all three political party leaders
- telephone interviews with a representative sample of 600 Southwark residents
- partner interviews with representatives from the Health Authority; Metropolitan Police; WS Atkins and CSL.

The key issues arising from the consultation are outlined below.

Communications Culture and organisation
The absence of a communications culture and effective delivery mechanisms for council-wide communications were identified as significant issues by political party leaders, members and business managers, as the following demonstrates:

Please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the following statements:	Members' net agreement	Business Managers' net agreement
The culture in Southwark supports effective communications	-53%	-50%
The devolved structure of the council's departments supports effective communications	-47%	-17%
Effective use is made of communications expertise in Southwark.	-73%	-58%

An independent consultant, commissioned to conduct a communications audit at the outset of the Best Value process, identified this lack of communications culture as one of the three causes of underperformance:

'Communications in Southwark are by no means a disaster… but it could work much better at little – or no – additional expense. The causes of this underperformance seem threefold: culture, structure and personnel.'

'Southwark's culture means that communicating with the public – especially via the media – is low on the agenda and the potential for good or bad media coverage is not plumbed in to corporate thinking and planning.'

'… Southwark plc will only maximise its messages to designated audiences if these are planned and executed as part of a corporate, strategic plan.'

Corporate strategy for communications
The lack of a corporate vision and communications framework was identified as a major obstacle in achieving clarity about the kind of image the council wishes to portray and how this should be most effectively marketed.   Members in particular saw the lack of council-wide communications standards and priorities as a barrier to effective communications. This theme was also picked up in one of the partner interviews.

In the absence of a clear corporate strategy, business managers felt that the council is unable to present an integrated public image. Staff felt that the council should be more proactive in creating a better public image which would in turn have a positive effect on staff, engendering pride in the council and the borough.

Promoting Southwark the council or borough?
Debate emerged amongst business managers about the aim of the strategy and subsequent marketing activity, summarised succinctly in the following quote from a business manager:

"What are we marketing? Are we marketing Southwark Council…. Or are we marketing Southwark as a place which is good to live…? That brings up the questions of branding as well – do we represent ourselves as one brand or are there several brands?"

Departmental communications
Individual departmental communications efforts are varied. Feedback from staff indicates that this is a result of staffing, management impetus and the departmental communications and customer culture. The lack of a corporate communications strategy leads to fragmented messages and a piecemeal approach to external communications within departments. It was felt that the existence of a strategy would legitimise communications as an important tool, with adequate resourcing.

Internal relationships and perspectives
Significant gaps in understanding and expectations emerged during consultation about the various roles, responsibilities, relationships and scope of service provided by, and required of departmental and central communications staff, and the business managers themselves. The following key issues emerged:

- successful communications activity between the central unit and departmental business managers is heavily dependent on personal relationships – in some cases support from the central unit was perceived to be lacking

- departmental communications staff view the closer working relationship with the central communications unit positively, as a means of reducing their isolation within departments and providing them with a source of professional support

- whilst business managers felt that departmental staff knew about the work priorities of their department in a way that central communications staff did not, the departmental communications staff themselves said they spent a lot of time educating and convincing staff of the importance of good external communications

- current levels of internal communication (particularly between departments) has an adverse impact on the ability of staff to give out clear and consistent messages.

Opportunities for joint working / information sharing
Partner agencies suggested that opportunities to work together with the council on joint communications activities should be actively explored and promoted. Shared information and joint campaigns to deliver messages to 'shared' stakeholders should be considered.

"We can send out publicity from Southwark through health networks, and we can use Southwark Life to communicate with people over health issues and display information – these things work both ways."
Health Authority.

Information for residents
Successive MORI residents' surveys have demonstrated a clear link between overall satisfaction with council services and the degree to which they feel well informed. Those who feel poorly informed are more likely to be dissatisfied high service users. They are also more likely to be unemployed or on low incomes, black and in the 55-64 age group.

Whilst residents receive information through a number of sources, their preferred route is directly from the council via leaflets / Southwark Life delivered to their door. Findings from other Best Value reviews, notably revenues and benefits and community housing services, suggests an improvement in the information provided to customers may reduce dissatisfaction, manage expectations and increase understanding of what the council is actually able to provide.

Residents also prioritise the need for basic information – 92% would find contact numbers useful, 84% are interested in detail about the services the council provides, and 83% would find targeted information useful.

Council staff are equally frustrated at the lack of information about council services…

"The fundamental problem that I have … is that we don't tell people what we do. We get calls and emails and we are constantly using the website to find … out about who to contact – one of my colleagues is now completely au fait with how you get married – and it's actually not his job."
Business Manager.

Southwark Life
In the 2001 Omnibus survey, 68% of residents said they received Southwark Life, 74% said they found it useful and 76% said it was very or fairly interesting. Those people who find it most useful also believe they are well informed about the council and are generally more satisfied. In addition:
- 83% of residents agreed that SL provides information and events in Southwark
- 70% agreed that is provides information on events in your local area
- 62% agreed that SL provides information on council services.

More information would be welcome on public meetings, including advertisements for services however there is less enthusiasm for advertisements for external agencies or private companies.

Southwark website

Usage of the website by the public is still relatively low however visitor numbers have increased and this is seen as positive by business managers and communications staff. Some business managers praise the Southwark site:

"What I like about (it) is the fact that most websites are actually designed for other councils to use … officers … business people, and I think what works about Southwark is actually it is designed more for customer use."

Others feel that a lack of investment in the website impacts on quality. They would also like to see a greater focus on the web needs of departments and business units. However the limitations of new technology in reaching all target groups within the community are also recognised:

"I think there are a number of people … the more socially excluded … who won't use the Internet, or … have access to it. I … would like us to be able to .. get the basic information out in different forms for those communities as well."

Press / Media Relations

External views of the press office, arising from the independent communications audit and the journalists survey, are very positive, however internal perspectives are more varied. Responses from business managers demonstrate a clear need for communications training and support to help non-communications managers understand the ingredients of news and the wider council and political context within which the news agenda must operate. There are occasionally clear conflicts between what constitutes a good news story at a local level (eg housing taking a tough line in evicting an elderly man for rent arrears) and the professional view of how it will be treated by journalists (ie scandal of old man thrown out of his home by Southwark Council).

The result is a dislocation between the central communications unit's quest for positive news stories to place proactively and business managers' expertise in being able to identify items that will interest a discerning media.

Marketing

There is a general view amongst officers and members that marketing efforts need to be increased, especially at a departmental and service level. However marketing activity should be reinforced by good quality service provision. Low levels of internal communications and poor customer relations were also cited as affecting the way in which any marketing is received.

Business managers were able to give examples of marketing campaigns, handled at both departmental and central levels, which successfully promoted a key message and achieved results. However the small number of experienced marketing professionals on hand at both levels was seen as a major factor in restricting the number of potential campaigns and marketing initiatives. In departments without an experienced marketing professional this was even more problematic.

Targeting

Consultation with staff in particular demonstrates a significant lack of understanding about target audience analysis and segmentation. There is a general consensus that current efforts do not always target the potential audience very effectively:

"There are inappropriate and sometimes unclear key messages to a very nebulous and unspecified target audience." Business Manager.

However, there are some positive examples where, with some thought, information has been directly targeted to a specific audience successfully (eg targeting benefits advice to elderly people through doctor's surgeries).

Hard to reach groups

Members and staff recognised the council's weakness in targeting 'hard to reach' groups, such as young people, non-English speakers and people with sensory impairments. There is general agreement that

media, marketing and information provision is not targeted at these audiences and that insufficient resources are made available to communicate through appropriate and accessible formats.

However there is a lack of clarity about this can best be achieved:

"I think there's a real problem here – how do you decide who (which language groups) to choose?"

2.3   Compare

Three benchmarking approaches were used to gather information for comparison:

- *Visits to London Authorities, other authorities and organisations*
  Four London Boroughs and a number of other authorities across the country were visited to gather information on the range and cost of communications activities, management structure and organisation, performance and other areas of good practice. A further visit was made to the Department of Work and Pensions to add the perspective of a large, central government department, with similarly diverse and difficult hard to reach groups.

- *Desktop analysis of benchmarking data compiled by Public PR*
  This database contains information gathered from around 180 local authorities, including ten London Boroughs. Cost of external communications (including specific activities, e.g. media service, Council magazine) and the use of strategies and policies are examined.

- *Desktop analysis of best practice examples*
  A range of best practice guidance, surveys and reports produced by DTLR, IDeA, the Local Government Association and other organisations have been examined.

Whilst the information gathered gives indicative comparisons with other organisations, it must be understood that benchmarking within the communications arena is still in its infancy for the following reasons:

- Communications is not a statutory duty for local councils and is therefore without a standard definition, minimum provision levels, quality standards or consistent performance information
- There is no listing of top 25% best performing authorities as there are for other services.

As a result of this, the application of hard performance indicators relating to quality, cost and effectiveness is still developing.

Findings

Organisation

Across the London boroughs that were visited, there is a trend towards greater centralisation of staff and control, although most retain centralised departmental communications functions for marketing and publicity work.   Some authorities have adopted an 'account management' approach or appointed identified 'portfolio holders', whilst others have retained less formal, ad hoc arrangements.

Of all the authorities visited, Southwark has one of the lowest numbers of staff:

	Central Team	Departments	Total
Newham	11	3	14
Lewisham	15	4	19
Camden	23	2	25
Southwark	10	4	14
Bedfordshire	19 (outsourced)	-	19
Kingston-upon-Hull	-	-	-
Kirklees	6	-	-

Management

In most authorities consulted, the Head of Communications reports directly to the Chief Executive. All those consulted agreed that support from the Chief Executive and other Chief Officers is essential to deliver successful corporate communications. The same principle applies within departments at DMT level and in some cases, PR officers regularly attend DMT meetings.

Close working relationships between central and departmental communications functions are also seen as key and some of these include professional line management arrangements.

Scope of communications responsibilities
In addition to press and marketing activities, most communications functions include a web manager or web team and most either manage or contribute to internal communications. There are a number of other activities that are emerging within the communications functions in many authorities and these include:
- External affairs
- Advertising
- Sponsorship
- Film location
- Events and tourism
- Community PR (community forums and strategic partnerships)
- Communications support for Scrutiny.

Communications Strategy
None of the local authorities visited had a formal communications strategy. Research through Public PR, the benchmarking group referred to earlier, suggests that less than half of local authorities have a written communications strategy and the composition and format of these varies significantly from one authority to the next. Few are truly strategic.

The Department of Pensions and Work has a written strategy that was established, and is developed through an on-going dialogue, with ministers. The strategy contains objectives and key messages and includes a comprehensive media-tracking programme to monitor coverage and tone.

Cost of communications
Comprehensive and comparable cost information was very difficult to obtain since few authorities have attempted to audit the full cost of communications spending. Differences in definitions and scope of communications activities and spending make meaningful comparisons doubly difficult. Camden appears to have the most comprehensive cost data of any authority and spend in 2000/01 was £3.9 million, broken down by staff and operational costs within the communications function. However individual departments spend additional – unidentified – sums on marketing activities.

This compares with the following cost breakdown for Southwark (extracted by FMS from SAP). A full copy of the relevant spreadsheets is attached at Appendix 2.

Department	Gross spend on marketing & publicity in 2001/02
Strategic Services (including Central Communications Unit)	£ 791,572
Education (including contract payment to WS Atkins)	£ 275,367
Housing general fund	£ 118
Regeneration, leisure and environment	£1,092,039
Social Services	£ 510,261
Housing HRA	£ 348,471
Housing DSO	£ 12,463
Total spend	**£3,030,291**

Direct employment and associated on-costs account for just £626,637 of this total. An additional £546,414 is spent across the council on recruitment advertising.

It is equally difficult to draw comparisons with private sector organisations since their activities are focused more towards customer services, brand development, loyalty programmes, advertising, web development and other marketing activities. Traditionally, large businesses spend around 3-5% of net revenue budget on marketing. In local government the spend is less than one per cent, and usually less than half of one per cent.

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Alternative funding sources
Several authorities consulted are using a range of methods to fund posts or part fund communications activities, such as the production of council magazines. Commercial advertising, sponsorship and film location officers tend to be self-financing posts.   Cheshire Fire Service has been especially successful in winning significant sponsorship to underwrite a variety of campaigns and branding initiatives.

Corporate identity and branding
All authorities attempt to control the use of their corporate identity, although formal control depends on the extent to which it is a clear corporate priority and the level of resource allocated for this task. Controlling the Council's image on printed materials (and sustaining a coherent council message) is generally seen as a key challenge.

Most authorities have produced a guide for the corporate brand and have procedures for monitoring or policing its application, and some councils are looking to develop key corporate messages to be used throughout the council. Other organisations, notably the Department of Work and Pensions, define and target their branding and marketing approaches by pre-determined audience segments (eg today's pensioners, tomorrow's pensioners etc), and have a 'vetting' committee to check for quality and accessibility from a target audience point of view.

Council magazines
Most London boroughs produce council newspapers or magazines regularly, from fortnightly to quarterly:

Authority	Style	Frequency	Pages	Print run	Staff Costs	Gross budget	Net budget	Unit cost
Greenwich	Paper	22	16	103,000	£54,000	£186,000	£186,000	11p
Croydon	Magazine	4	24	140,000	£55,000	£72,000	£63,000	21p
Camden	Magazine	6	24	115,000	£25,000	£110,000	£85,000	16p
Ham& Fulham	Magazine	10	32	90,000	£10,000	£230,000	£0	1p
Lewisham	Magazine	6	24	127,000	£15,000	£150,000	£94,800	14p
Barking & Dagenham	Magazine	12	16	68,000	£25,028	£109,000	£109,000	16p
Havering	Paper	8	8	92,000	£25,000	£95,000	£79,000	14p
Birmingham	Paper	24	16	400,000	-	£588,000	£533,000	6p
Newcastle	Magazine	12	28	170,000	-	£237,000	£151,000	7p
Southwark	**Magazine**	**6**	**24**	**132,000**	**£20,500**	**£155,000**	**£145,000**	**21p**

Southwark Life is significantly more expensive to produce than other magazines. However, the figures should be considered with some caution. The absence of details about distribution methods, and use of full colour makes comparison difficult. With the exception of Greenwich and Barking and Dagenham, every other authority in the above list offset production and distribution costs with advertising and sponsorship revenue. In Southwark, this was piloted from the middle of the last financial year, although without any structured sales campaign, nor any dedicated sales effort. Professional opinion about the value of advertising versus the input of time and effort required to make it successful remains divided. Advertising is particularly difficult for publications that appear infrequently.

Media relations
Media relations are at the heart of local authority communications activity and, in almost every case, this function is handled centrally by a core team. Most authorities carry out some form of media monitoring similar to that carried out in Southwark – logging the number of enquiries, the percentage of enquiries dealt with within set timescales, the tone of the coverage, the number of press releases and so on.

Southwark's performance compared to other councils is set out below.

Borough	Cost of service	Enquiries	Releases	Cost of service divided by releases	Cost of service divided by enquiries
Barking & Dagenham	£73,500	800	690	£106.52	£91.88
Camden	£331,000	2,000	450	£735.56	£165.50
Croydon	£64,500	1,700	600	£107.50	£37.94
Hackney	£91,500	2,600	500	£183	£35.19
Hammersmith & Fulham	£83,000	1,800	450	£184.44	£46.11
Havering	N/A	500	300	N/A	N/A
Lewisham	£119,000	1,250	400	£297.50	£95.20
Waltham Forest	£100,000	2,500	200	£500	£40
Westminster	£500,000	10,000	500	£1000	£50
Southwark	**£112,000**	**2,500**	**400**	**£280**	**£44.80**

Website
This is one of the newer communications activities for local authorities and provision varies significantly between different councils. In Lewisham, three communications staff look after the Internet and Intranet and plans are in hand to appoint an e-government marketing officer, located within the Communications Team, for a period of four years to spread the e-government message internally and externally.

In Newham, the council is setting up a web portal, 'Newham.com', so searches on any place associated with the borough will be directed to this site. This 'gateway' to Newham will be marketing led.

Evaluation / value for money
Like Southwark, many local councils have introduced monitoring systems to evaluate the success of their press and PR activities. However evaluation models to assess the appropriateness, success and cost-effectiveness of marketing and publicity campaigns are less common. Conscious of the high visibility and potential intangibility of the results of such activities, the GICS (Government and Information Communications Service) has established a Value for Money checklist of questions which against which all publicity proposals are rigorously measured. This includes a clear indication of how results are to be measured against objectives.

2.4   Key Conclusions arising from Challenge, Consult and Compare stages

There are some clear themes emerging from each of these stages.

1. ***Strategic approach to communications***   Only a small number of local councils have in place a comprehensive corporate communications strategy, and even those that do exist vary significantly. This is undoubtedly a reflection of the priority, resourcing and status given to external communications activities by senior management teams in such councils. By contrast, the Department of Work and Pensions sees communications as a priority, underpinned by the close involvement of a Minister.

   A strategic approach to communications is required which clearly defines key messages, corporate branding and clear end objectives to overcome the current lack of integration and consistency across external communications.

2. ***Structure for delivering communications***   External Communications provision is generally based on a central unit with varying levels of departmental communications activity.   Understanding and managing the production of local service-based publicity materials (and associated costs) at a business unit or equivalent level is a common problem. Externalisation of the core communications function is rare, and does not currently exist anywhere within metropolitan councils.

3. ***Scope of communications function***   The scope of central communications functions has grown in recent years to accommodate a number of additional functions, most notably website management, which is probably the most significant area of growth and development. Communications and PR support for community forums and partnerships is another interesting growth area.

4. ***Corporate identity***   Whilst officers across local government pay lip service to the importance of a strong corporate brand (also picked up by Southwark's Interim Member Challenge Panel) and sustained coherent council messages, in practice enforcement of this is seen as a key challenge.

5. ***Information and overall resident satisfaction***   There is a clear link between overall resident satisfaction with the way Southwark council is providing services and the degree to which they feel informed. Most residents would like to see more information about how to contact the council and about the services themselves.

6. ***Staff perspective***   Within Southwark, staff and members see significant scope for improvement in external communications. Staff clearly recognise the importance of good service delivery and good customer relations in underpinning sustained proactive external communications activity.

7. ***Communications culture***   There is a lack of a council-wide communications culture and prioritisation within Southwark which is considered by members and managers alike to be a major obstacle in achieving effective external communications.

8. ***Clarification of roles and responsibilities***   The roles, responsibilities and remit of central and departmental communications staff need to be clarified, and consistency agreed across the council. The devolution of external communications responsibilities and budgets to business managers also needs to be addressed.

It is very clear from these conclusions, and the detailed analysis from which they are drawn. that there is a need within Southwark to create a much more proactive and marketing-led approach to communications. This will require a significant change to culture, prioritisation and the mechanistic aspects of communications delivery.

3.   VISION FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

3.1   Introduction

Analysis of the challenge, consultation and benchmarking that has taken place during the course of this review suggests only a very limited number of potential options for the future provision of external communications in Southwark.   However alternative service / procurement options have been considered in the next section.

Clearly, the wishes of the new political administration are a major influence on the final shape of the provision and, more importantly, the design, content and execution of a future external communications strategy.

The complexity of the issues and environment within which the Council works creates a more substantial challenge in Southwark than in most other councils in achieving a sustained approach to corporate branding and the promotion of a coherent council message.

Prioritisation and adequate resourcing of external communications is key. Crude analysis of the apparent council spend on marketing, publicity and associated communications activities across departments and business units in 2000/01 (see breakdown on page 9) suggests that the level of spend in Southwark is significant. However, this is currently spread on an ad hoc basis across a multiplicity of budgets, some of which are project-based and funded via capital, with little central co-ordination at a departmental level.

It seems certain therefore that there is significant scope for enhancements and improvements without the need to create additional budget.

3.2   Vision for the next five years

1. Positioning Southwark

Debate about the basis for the future promotion of Southwark was extensive during the consultation stage of this review. At the outset, four core aims were identified:

- establishing and promoting the reputation of Southwark Council;
- supporting the council's community leadership role;
- promoting, and informing people about, council services;
- and developing the use of new technology.

Whilst the key focus is on Southwark Council, the wider promotion of Southwark the borough is equally relevant and crucial in helping to achieve the core communications aims we set ourselves. The vision, values and priorities identified by the new administration should set the future framework for our communications approach in Southwark. But the council cannot deliver these priorities alone. Key to their success are partners and partnerships such as the LSP, police, health and transport agencies, education and training providers, businesses and of course, the community themselves. The council is well placed to take a lead and co-ordinating role, working with these agencies to achieve integrated promotion of Southwark as a whole.

At the heart of this is a shift in the basic premise from which communications activity is agreed and developed, and in the overall communications culture of organisations across Southwark.

Future vision
- Strategic communications becomes a part of the annual service planning and budget making process
- Each department has a nominated second tier officer as their departmental 'communications advocate' and strategic communications representative
- Communications becomes a standing item on DMT/SMT and COT agendas
- Cabinet and COT take full ownership and responsibility for the development of a four year corporate communications strategy and annual communications programme (see 3 below), monitored quarterly at COT and Cabinet meetings

- Joint communications activities with partner organisations become formalised via agreement at a senior (chief executive / borough commander / chair) level; protocols and regular liaison meetings are planned to ensure maximum effectiveness for all joint communications initiatives.

Benefits
- Consideration of communications issues becomes integral to policy and strategy development, as well as the annual service planning process
- Communications activities across organisational boundaries become significantly more powerful as a result of smarter working between partners.

2. Shifting to a proactive communications agenda

It has been clear throughout the review that the positive potential of Southwark services and other initiatives is significantly under-exploited. Whilst our ability to manage bad news and respond to journalists' enquiries is highly regarded, there is a distinct lack of planned, consistent proactive media and marketing activity.

This clearly needs to be addressed if we are to succeed in positioning Southwark in the way outlined above. Together with the following, many of the proposals outlined in this section will support the required change in culture to promote ownership and delivery of a more proactive communications agenda.

Future vision
- COT considers proactive communications as a regular standing agenda item
- Significant culture shift from over-emphasis and defensive response to local news stories, to proactive news management, sound forward planning, and promotion of excellence and success
- Early warning systems and news management well-developed, mechanisms in place to support managers and their teams in actively seeking out proactive opportunities, to celebrate success and reinforce performance improvement at a local level
- Role of staff recognised, and supported in their role, as ambassadors and advocates for Southwark Council.

3. Corporate Communications Strategy

The development of a corporate communications strategy will be an early priority. The absence of such a strategy creates a significant gap in the council's ability to address the issues of consistency of message, identity and branding picked up by members during the Interim Challenge stage and by staff during consultation.

Subsequent consultation with the new council administration has highlighted this as an early and urgent priority. They recognise the need for a clear strategy that promotes a strong council vision, values and priorities and the actions being taken to deliver them.

The existence of a communications strategy is also a requirement within the Corporate Performance Assessment framework against which all local authorities' performance is to be measured.

Future vision
The Strategy will need to address the following:

- Vision, values and priorities
- Identity – definitive rules on Southwark branding
- Equality – audience segmentation and analysis to ensure accurate, timely and relevant targeting of all audiences (including a definitive policy and framework for inclusive communications)
- Key channels – preferred communications channels
- Protocols – to establish minimum standards and roles and responsibilities (including standard communications and branding requirements of external organisations delivering services on behalf of the council)
- Evaluation models – to review communications and campaign proposals before execution, and to monitor the success and performance of communications activities once completed.
- Four-year overarching communications programme – outlined in more detail each year through an annual communications programme.

Benefits
- Clear framework for all communications activity across the council
- Clarity amongst all staff of Council vision, values and priorities and their role in supporting the delivery of these
- Greater consistency of approach to communications across all service and departmental areas within the council
- Greater focus on who the audience is, what their requirements are and the most effective ways of reaching them
- Cost savings and economies of scale as a result of better forward planning, improved co-ordination and a rationalisation of communications activity council-wide.

4. Social outcomes of an inclusive approach to communications

As the review has established, there is currently a lack of coherence and quality in the way that we consider, understand and subsequently communicate with our various audiences, including those with special communications needs. Whilst the creation and implementation of the Corporate Communications Strategy referred to above will help to address this, it is sufficiently important to single out.

Future vision
It is our aim to ensure that people receive council-related information that is:
- Appropriate to them as individuals
- Clear, accurate and timely
- Designed to meet particular communications needs – ie people whose first language is not English, or who have a sensory disability or low levels of literacy
- Efficiently produced and available in a variety of forms, at locations convenient to them.

5. Role of Corporate Communications Unit

It is clear from the benchmarking activities, plus nationwide reviews carried out by MORI, DTLR, LGA and IdeA, that a central communications function has a pivotal role to play in delivering strategic communications. It is equally evident that this can be only be successful with the full support and ownership of senior members and officers. Many of the organisations consulted, including the GICS, saw culture change and the involvement of communications at an early stage in policy and strategy development as crucial to the success of any future communications activity.

Future vision
- The Corporate Communications Unit retains the 'professional' lead for communications across the council, working closely and proactively with Cabinet, Chief Officers and DMT/SMTs, and partner organisations.

- Multi-functional teams are created to support departmental communications officers in achieving departmental / service communications objectives and ensure a 'joined up ' approach across all communications activities (ie media relations, marketing and publications and new media) centrally and departmentally.

- The Corporate Communications Unit takes over a central co-ordination role for proactively promoting and managing film location requests in Southwark and considers the resource implications of future PR and communications support for area committees and other community partnerships.

- The Corporate Communications Unit takes strategic responsibility for developing and monitoring the following, in consultation with Cabinet, chief officers, DMTs and departmental communications officers:
    - ⇒ Corporate Communications Strategy
    - ⇒ Detailed guidance on corporate identity, branding and 'family' formats for all council publications
    - ⇒ Inclusive communications and access policy (covering translation, interpretation, sensory impairment).

Benefits
- Higher council priority given to strategic and proactive external communications
- Clear strategic communications framework and council message
- Consistent branding (and therefore heightened recognition) for all council publications and communications activities
- Improved sense of consistency and a seamless one-stop approach to support departmental communications initiatives and specific budget-limited campaigns.

6. Role of, and support for, Departmental Communications Officers

Professional external communications provision within departments is inconsistent and ad hoc and, in some cases, non-existent. Even in those departments where such a function does exist, business managers still exercise the right to 'manage' their own communications activities. Quality, targeting, language, accessibility and distribution each suffer as a result.

Recruitment and retention of good quality, professional and creative communications staff is a constant problem, within the central communications unit and in particular within departments. During a time of relative economic buoyancy, we struggle to compete with the private sector. Departmental communications officers can feel particularly isolated.

Future vision
- Each department centralises all communications activities and budgets under a professional communications function, with:
    - ⇒ split reporting directly to a departmental second tier officer and to the central communications manager (for professional support and development)
    - ⇒ free and direct access to the Chief Officer whenever necessary
    - ⇒ a regular scheduled communications slot at the department's management team meetings.
- Each department, led by the communications officer working closely with DMT and business managers, produces an annual communications plan which fits within the structure, vision, aims and priorities of the overall Corporate Communications Strategy.

Benefits
- More effective publicity and information about council services – timely, targeted, socially inclusive, and distributed to maximum effect
- Service specific knowledge and contacts combined with professional communications expertise
- Greater efficiencies on communications spend across all council departments
- Strengthening of 'professional' support for communications officers across the council
- Improved recruitment and retention of quality communications staff.

7. Improved co-ordination

Achieving a high degree of consistency and quality within a definitive corporate communications framework will only be achieved through tighter co-ordination of all communications activities across the council. This applies equally across service and departmental boundaries and cross cutting initiatives involving external agencies, as much as it does between central and departmental communications activities.

Future vision
- Monthly Forum of communications officers from council, health, police and other external agencies (building on monthly Forum already in place for Council communications officers)
- Expanded terms of reference to bring mutual benefit to all partners and establish strong joint communications agenda:
    - ⇒ Master Classes with external communications experts
    - ⇒ sharing best practice, information and intelligence about events and initiatives
    - ⇒ development of joint communications activities, campaigns and distribution channels
    - ⇒ use combined force of all agencies to exercise leverage with local media.

Benefits
- Information is shared across the organisation and beyond and fed back through to a pro-active calendar of communications / PR events and activities council-wide

- Communications officers across the council work smarter and more effectively, within their own departments and with external communications officers.

6. *Performance indicators*

Benchmarking which took place as part of this review demonstrated the difficulties of establishing performance indicators for all aspects of communications activity the council undertakes. Unlike statutory services, there are no BV performance indicators and even attempts to measure basic aspects of performance are questionable in terms of common definitions. However, in the absence of national indicators, Southwark must develop its own.

Future vision
The following indicators should be confirmed as an absolute minimum.
- Media relations:
    ⇒ Number of press releases produced per month against target
    ⇒ Hit rate for press releases
    ⇒ Number of press enquiries per month
    ⇒ Response time for press enquiries against target
    ⇒ Analysis of coverage (good, bad, neutral)

- Information
    ⇒ MORI measurement bi-annually of the degree to which people feel well-informed about council services (need stretch target here).

Benefits
- Communications activities are measured to assess impact and effectiveness
- Development of communications strategy and annual plans becomes a more iterative process.

3.3   Key actions required to achieve the Vision

These are covered in the improvement plan.

3.4   Main resource options

Initial interrogation of SAP undertaken by FMS suggests that the council's total spend on communications and associated activities is substantial. Whilst more detailed work with departments may be needed to analyse the figures further, it is still likely that the proposals outlined within this review could be achieved without any additional spend and, probably, with budget to spare.

3.4   Risk analysis

At each stage of this review the same core messages relating to culture, ownership, commitment and strategic priority have recurred time and again – at the interim member challenge panel, during the independent communications audit, and throughout the consultation and benchmarking stages. The CPA and IDeA have also recognised the importance of a strategic approach to communications in their benchmarking and assessment models. Inability to deliver against each of these on a corporate scale is the biggest risk factor to delivering the communications approach outlined here.

4.   SERVICE / PROCUREMENT OPTIONS

See table on next page

Criteria	Discontinue service	Externalise service		Retain in house		Mixed economy	Form partnership
		Sell/transfer/mana-gement buy out	Tender whole service	Continue existing provision	Restructure	Combination of in-house and external	
Cost	X Although not a statutory service, this is not a real option: CPA assessment specifically looks for existence of communications strategy & mechanisms for delivery; residents want information about council services & initiatives (evidenced by MORI)	X Technically, services can be transferred but would still require local authority client May incur increased costs once service is broken down and costed in detail; client / liaison function still required centrally (& departmentally) No examples of this option found	X Technically, services can be transferred but would still require local authority client May incur increased costs once service is broken down and costed in detail; client / liaison function still required centrally (& departmentally) Only one example of this option found (Beds CC)	✓ Unit costs generally in line with other comparable organisations.	✓ Potential for savings through removal of devolved communications responsibilities from business managers & subsequent centralisation of communications budgets within departments	✓ Use of external specialists will continue on the basis that this is more cost-effective than retaining high level of all specialisms in-house (eg design & marketing support for campaigns, photography, print); potential for further cost savings through economies of scale achieved as a result of restructure	✓ Potential for joint working with other local providers / partners (health, police, LSP) could achieve cost savings via joint campaigns & shared distribution channels
Quality	See 'cost'	Quality of communications may improve but distancing communications delivery further away from the council carries significant risks	Quality of communications may improve but distancing communications delivery further away from the council carries significant risks	Implement Best Value Improvement Plan	Shifting communications from business managers to the control of depart'l communications professionals will achieve major improvements in quality	Greater standardisation of design & marketing via more focused use of external specialists will achieve greater quality & consistency	More strategic approach should lead to greater sense of joined up working & thinking in public's perception of cross agency working

Impact on other council services & structures	See 'cost'	May lead to even greater fragmentation of communications activity than currently exists	May lead to even greater fragmentation of communications activity than currently exists	Greater flexibility & potential to respond and provide tailored service to meet new service / structural needs	Much better structure for developing & executing communications activities to support cross departmental & themed initiatives	Greater standardisation of design & marketing via more focused use of external specialists will achieve greater quality &	More strategic approach should lead to greater sense of joined up working & thinking in public's perception of cross agency working
Risk factors	See 'cost'	Very immature market; notable examples of failure in the past	Very immature market; notable examples of failure in the past	Difficulties in recruitment and retention of professional communications staff (in particular at times of economic buoyancy)	Resistance from Business Managers unless case is well argued and presented Difficulties in recruitment and retention of professional communications staff (in particular at times of economic buoyancy)	Risk minimal	Differences between organisational objectives, values & culture may require careful negotiation to achieve consensus
Need for flexibility	See 'Cost'	Highly inflexible, given difficulties of anticipating precise nature of demand against requirement for contractual framework	Highly inflexible, given difficulties of anticipating precise nature of demand against requirement for contractual framework	Allows maximum flexibility, within reason, to respond to unforeseen demands	Allows maximum flexibility, within reason, to respond to unforeseen demands	Allows maximum flexibility	Flexibility could be constrained by differences identified above (see risk factors)
Staffing implications / specialist skills	See ' Cost'	Specialist skills key, plus understanding of local government & political	Specialist skills key, plus understanding of local government & political	Specialist skills key, plus understanding of local government & political	Specialist skills key, plus understanding of local government & more detailed	Specialist skills readily available	Specialist knowledge shared across different organisations

		environment; major risk factor in considering this option	environment; major risk factor in considering this option	environment	knowledge of / ability to grasp service area		
Community/ Neigh'hood impact	See 'cost'	May have a negative impact, ie lack of understanding of local community / culture / area / issues	May have a negative impact, ie lack of understanding of local community / culture / area / issues	Wealth of local knowledge allows communications to be more community focused and effectively targeted	Wealth of local knowledge allows communications to be more community focused and effectively targeted	Limited use of small number of external specialists (drawn from locality wherever possible) allows them to draw upon local knowledge & expertise	Allows partner organisations to promote greater focus, better clarity and understanding, and simpler targeted communications.
Consumer satisfaction	See 'cost'	Levels of customer satisfaction may reduce as a result of greater distance from community (see point above)	Levels of customer satisfaction may reduce as a result of greater distance from community (see point above)	Improvements required in some areas. Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Improvements required in some areas. Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Improvements required in some areas. Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Not currently measured. Partnership working may result in improvements in certain areas such as community safety

Equality	See 'cost'	May have a negative impact, ie lack of understanding of local community / culture / area / issues	May have a negative impact, ie lack of understanding of local community / culture / area / issues	Improvements required in some areas (notably translation, interpretation & communications for people with sensory disability) Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Improvements required in some areas (notably translation, interpretation & communications for people with sensory disability) Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Improvements required in some areas (notably translation, interpretation & communications for people with sensory disability) Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Improvements required in some areas (notably translation, interpretation & communications for people with sensory disability) Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan
Environment	See 'cost'	Minimal impact	Minimal impact	Potential to develop sustainability policy (recycled paper etc) Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Potential to develop sustainability policy (recycled paper etc) Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Potential to develop sustainability policy (recycled paper etc) Highlight in Best Value Improvement Plan	Minimal impact, other than by influence (adjacent columns)

Have you identified a need to develop markets for the service?   *Yes, however it is unlikely that this will happen in the short or even medium term. Undoubtedly, the Bedfordshire / Hyda arrangement will be watched with interest to assess its success.*

Have you taken steps to develop markets? Please give details: *No. See above*

SECTION TWO – IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1.   SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES

At the outset of this review, the Project Board agreed four core aims for the external communications functions against which our performance, stakeholder opinion and best practice from elsewhere have been analysed and assessed.

During the course of each stage, feedback has confirmed these aims as the core objectives for the development of Southwark's future external communications activities:

- establishing and promoting the reputation of Southwark Council;
- supporting the council's community leadership role;
- promoting, and informing people about council services;
- and developing the use of new technology.

In essence this means:

Objective 1   Establishing and promoting the reputation of Southwark Council

- Developing a higher visibility for Southwark, and promoting a clearer understanding amongst local communities of the council's purpose and priorities, value for money and openness;
- Creating a higher profile for the Council as a dynamic, efficient and business-like organisation at a local, regional and national level;
- Building recognition of Southwark as an example of best practice and position the council as the first point of contact for journalists seeking an informed opinion on key municipal or social issues.

Objective 2   Community Leadership

- Using the full range of communications tools available to support the council and members in engaging and leading their local communities;
- Publicising the councils' political decision-making processes, centrally and locally, in a way that is clear and accessible for all parts of the community;
- Providing professional communications advice and support to community and multi-agency partnerships.

Objective 3   Promoting, and informing people about, council services

- Using the full range of communications tools available to give all parts of the community equal access to information about council services - when they want it, where they want it, and in the way they would most like to receive it.

Objective 4   Developing the use of new technology – E-branding Southwark

- Using the full range of new media tools available to support the delivery of each of the first three core objectives.

2.   ARRANGEMENTS FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL

The draft Vision was discussed and considered by the Best Value Project Board, Chief Officer Team and the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Service Delivery (including communications), an internal Challenge Panel and a Members Panel.   The final Vision in this report includes refinements arising from these discussions.

3.   MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The management arrangements for implementation are in fact not overly onerous, since much of the structure is already in place. The key outstanding issues are outlined below.

3.1   Removal of devolved communications responsibility from Business Managers
As a consequence of this proposal and the wider review of strategic support services – finance, IT and HR – Chief Officer Team have commissioned a Best Value mini-review of devolution.

However, improvements to external communications will be expedited far more rapidly if devolved responsibility for directly commissioning communications activity is removed from Business Managers as soon as possible (in those departments with departmental communications support).   Instead each Business Manager will be required to consider his / her services' communications needs as part of the annual business planning process, taking advice from the departmental communications officer(s) and the central multi-disciplinary communications team supporting him / her, and working within the framework of the Corporate Communications Strategy.

3.2   Gaps in departmental provision
An audit of current departmental provision (and the associated level of skills available across the council) is required to identify gaps in skills and, more fundamentally, in physical resources – ie bodies. A consistent approach to recruitment is also required to assure minimum levels of professional expertise, experience and knowledge. Consideration will subsequently be needed to identify how the gaps identified can be filled, by recruitment, training and 'on-the-job' development.

3.3   Identification of second tier managers to act as Communications Advocates
Ownership and support at a senior level within the organisation have already been identified as major risk factors, and the early identification of second tier Communications Advocates in each department will help to address this.

4.   COMMUNICATING THE PLAN TO COUNCIL STAFF

In order to achieve the rapid change in the quality and effectiveness of external communications that is clearly required, effective internal communication to staff of the new approach to external communications is critical.   Development of a programme to provide guidance, information and support to staff during and after the transition from the devolved model currently in place to the new model proposed is included in the improvement plan.

5. IMPROVEMENT PLAN – YEARS 1 & 2

OBJECTIVE 1 – ESTABLISH AND PROMOTE THE REPUTATION OF SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

Objective 1   Establish and promote the reputation of Southwark Council

Sub-Objectives
1. Develop a higher, more positive, profile for Southwark, and promote a clearer understanding amongst local communities of the council's vision and priorities and value for money
2. Creating a higher profile for the Council as a dynamic, efficient and business-like organisation at a local, regional and national level
3. Building recognition of Southwark as an example of best practice and position the council as the first point of contact for journalists seeking an informed opinion on key municipal or social issues.

Sub-Objective 1

Develop a higher, more positive, profile for Southwark, and promote a clearer understanding amongst local communities of the council's vision and priorities and value for money

Action	Performance Measures and Targets	Lead Responsibility (named officer)
1 Create four-year Corporate Communications Strategy 1.1 Develop four-year overarching Communications Strategy – outlined in more detail each year through an annual communications programme - in consultation with member Executive & Chief Officers: Strategy will need to address: • Vision, values and priorities • Core Council messages • Equality – audience segmentation & analysis to ensure accurate, timely & relevant targeting of all audiences (inc definitive policy & delivery mechanism for inclusive communications) • Key communications channels • Protocols – minimum standards, roles & responsibilities (including communications &	Corporate Communications Strategy agreed & in place by end February 2003	Head of Comms

branding requirements of external organisations delivering services on behalf of the council) • Evaluation models – to review communications and campaign proposals before execution, and to monitor success & performance of communications activities once completed. 1.2 Develop execution plan to deliver corporate strategy 1.3 Develop internal communications programme to raise awareness of strategy amongst second and third tier managers 1.4 Develop guidance to support development of departmental communications plans as part of annual service planning and budget setting process	 Develop in tandem with strategy, & to same timescale Programme in place by February 2003; execution via roadshows & business managers' briefings complete by end March 2003 Guidance in place March 2003	 Head of Comms Head of Comms
2 Corporate Identity Guidelines 2.1 Develop internal communications programme to raise awareness of new guidelines	 Programme in place by December 2002; execution in tandem with awareness raising programme for Corporate Communications Strategy. Launch April 2003	 Head of Comms
3 Review and re-focus devolved business manager responsibilities for external communications 3.1 Review current position with regard to BM responsibilities 3.2 Identify actual spend on communications by department/ business unit (inc differentiation between revenue / capital costs)	 Review completed by end January 2003 Spend analysis complete by February 2003	 Head of Comms FMS plus dept'l finance managers
4 Implement new communications framework at corporate & departmental levels 4.1 Identify departmental second tier 'Communications Advocates'	 Chief Officers to nominate by end January 2003	 Chief Officers

4.2 Establish common structure, including reporting lines for departmental communications functions	Issues resolved by March 2003	Head of Comms plus HR
4.3 Communications in place as a monthly standing item on COT & DMT agendas	February 2003	Chief Executive & COT

Objective 1	Establish and promote the reputation of Southwark Council	
Sub-Objective 2 **Creating a higher profile for the Council as a dynamic, efficient and business-like organisation at a local, regional and national level**		
Action	**Performance Measures and Targets**	**Lead Responsibility (named officer)**
1 Breakfast briefings programme 1.1 Re-run programme of breakfast briefings for key stakeholders & opinion formers (Leader & Chief Executive)	Monthly programme in place, starting March 2003	Head of Comms
2 Proactive 'public affairs' strategy 2.1 Establish proactive 'public affairs' strategy for leading Members & senior officers	Set performance targets as part of strategy, eg target one regional / national conference appearance a month; Full strategy and programme running by April 2003	As above
2.2 Recognise role of staff as Southwark ambassadors by setting up bulletin board on Intranet, regular items in Staff Voice, & good news noticeboards across all council buildings	Full scheme running by April 2003	Lise Colyer & dept'l Comms Officers

Objective 1 Establish and promote the reputation of Southwark Council		
Sub-Objective 3 **Building recognition of Southwark as an example of best practice and position the council as the first point of contact for journalists seeking an informed opinion on key municipal or social issues**		
Action	**Performance Measures and Targets**	**Lead Responsibility (named officer)**
1 Media Targeting Forward Plan 1.1 Develop proactive media targeting forward plan: - COT & Executive to contribute and review monthly via standing item at COT, & Leader's communications meetings - Establish advance warning mechanism to flag up national programmes & events, gov't announcements, white papers etc	Forward Plan already a standing item on Leader's meeting; add to agenda of COT meetings from April 2003 Review forward planners already on the market by end February 2003 Develop pro forma to circulate monthly with Forward Plan to COT & DMT meetings by April 2003	Chief Executive Lise Colyer / Kirsty Senior Lise Colyer / Kirsty Senior
2 Target journalists 2.1 Compile e-mail database of target journalists (regional, national, specialist – print & broadcast)	March 2003	Lise Colyer / Kirsty Senior

OBJECTIVE 2 – COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Objective 2   Community Leadership
Sub-Objectives 1. Use the full range of communications tools available to support the council and members in engaging and leading their local communities; 2. Publicise the council's new political decision-making processes in a way that is clear and accessible for all parts of the community; 3. Provide professional communications advice and support to community and multi-agency partnerships.

Sub-Objective 1
Use the full range of communications tools available to support the council and members in engaging and leading their local communities

Action	Performance Measures and Targets	Lead Responsibility (named officer)

1   *Create publicity and pr programme to support Community Councils & new neighbourhood focus*
1.1 Develop programme in consultation with member Executive & Chief Officers, within the broad framework of the Corporate Communications Strategy; strategy should include information re:
   - clear distinction between old area forums & new approach
   - incentives to encourage & sustain local involvement
   - how to get involved
	Programme agreed by February 2003	Head of Comms

1.2 Develop execution plan to deliver publicity & pr programme	Execution plan agreed by February 2003 Start pre-launch publicity in time for start of Community Councils	

Objective 2	Community Leadership	

Sub-Objective 2
Publicise the council's' political decision-making processes, centrally and locally, in a way that is clear and accessible for all parts of the community

Action	Performance Measures and Targets	Lead Responsibility (named officer)
1 Create higher awareness of decision-making processes & opportunities for residents to become involved		
1.1 Develop 'user-friendly' guide to the new Constitution	Guide in place by March 2003	Head of Comms / Head of Corporate Strategy (Ian Hughes) / Borough Solicitor
1.2 Review 'Have your Say' branding & all information currently in public domain	Branding & information review complete by end January 2003	
1.3 Develop proactive publicity & pr programme to publicise Community Councils, council meetings, council questions etc	Programme & execution plan agreed & in place by date of launch of Community Councils	

Objective 2 Community Leadership		
Sub-Objective 3 Provide professional communications advice and support to community and multi-agency partnerships.		
Action	**Performance Measures and Targets**	**Lead Responsibility (named officer)**
1 Improve joint communications activities with external partnerships & partner organisations 1.1 Identify key partnerships & agree protocols to ensure maximum effectiveness for all joint communications initiative	Mapping exercise complete & protocols in place by January 2003	Head of Comms / Communications Advocates
1.3 Run monthly forum of communications officers from council, health, police & other external agencies (building on existing Forum for Council communications officers)	Wider Forum running by March 2003	Lise Colyer
1.4 Expand terms of reference to bring mutual benefit to all Partners, develop expertise & establish strong joint communications agenda through: - Master Classes with external experts - sharing best practice, information & intelligence about events and initiatives - development of joint communications activities, campaigns & distribution channels	Consultation with wider forum March / April 2003 2003/04 Forum programme in place July 2003	Lise Colyer

OBJECTIVE 3– PROMOTE, AND INFORM PEOPLE ABOUT, COUNCIL SERVICES

Objective 3 Promote, and inform people about, council services		
Sub-Objective 1 **Use the full range of communications tools available to give all parts of the community equal access to information about council services - when they want it, where they want it, and in the way they would most like to receive it**		
Action	**Performance Measures and Targets**	**Lead Responsibility (named officer)**
1 Develop communications and information programme, aligning with Customer Access Strategy where relevant		
1.1 Audit all current service information materials produced across the Council & highlight examples of best practice	Audit completed by April 2003	Lise Colyer / Forum Members
1.2 Develop service information and take-up programme as part of overall departmental communications plans through service planning process identified in 1.4 (page 28) & in line with new corporate identity guidelines	Service information programme in place by March 2003	CO, Comms Advocates & dept'l comms officers
1.3 Develop overall distribution strategy for publicity and information materials about council services, focusing on taking information out to where people already are	Additional research needed March 2003	Lise Colyer / Forum
1.4 Establish feedback mechanisms for all materials to assess take-up, clarity, accessibility & relevance.	Consistent framework for feedback developed by March 2003	Lise Colyer / Forum
1.5 Assess effectiveness of service information materials and take-up initiatives annually, prior to development of annual programme	January / February 2004	CO, Comms Advocates & dept'l comms officers

OBJECTIVE 4— DEVELOPING THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY — E-BRANDING SOUTHWARK

Objective 4 Developing the use of new technology – e-branding Southwark		
Sub-Objective 1 **Use the full range of new media tools available to support the delivery of each of the first three core objectives**		
Action	**Performance Measures and Targets**	**Lead Responsibility (named officer)**
1 Continue development of website and review its potential of website as a portal for Southwark, the place, as well as Southwark, the Council 1.1 Complete mapping of existing website & improve site navigation, content management etc	Complete by April 2003	Head of Comms/ Lise Colyer Ditto
1.2 Provide communications and editorial expertise to support achievement of BV157 objective (100% service delivery electronically by 2005)	On-going	Lise Colyer / Forum
1.3 Prepare proposal for consideration by Chief Executives / Borough Commander etc of other public service providers	By end March 2003	Head of Comms
2 Achieve target for installation of 20 I+kiosks		
2.1 Complete negotiations for additional 18 kiosks	March 2003	Head of Comms
2.2 Explore opportunities for I-Kiosks to support information strategy arising from broader development of Southwark portal (see above)	April 2003	Head of Comms