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Appendix D

Future Tandridge Programme Communications Business Case

Project/Service	Communications
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1. Executive summary

The Council is reviewing all its services with the aim of becoming a smaller, more strategic, agile and responsive organisation. Expenditure needs to be reduced to an affordable level, now and in the future, focusing resources on key priorities.

The communications service has been identified as an area where savings can be made. As part of the service reviews, two options were considered to provide the future service. The current service option was detailed for reference. One option was to provide a reduced service in-house and the second to consider outsourcing the service.

A full specification, which details all three options, is attached at Appendix A. This outlines:

- Option 1: The current service.
- Option 2: An in-house reduced service.
- Option 3: An outsourced service.

In drawing up Appendix A, the team focused on identifying what core communication activities could be carried out by a smaller or outsourced team, which would still deliver outcomes to meet the Council's priorities and deliver the savings. Section 3.2 provides more details.

Outcome of the service review

The service reviews explored options 2 and 3 to evaluate which would provide the most cost effective communications service, deliver the savings and meet the Council's requirements.

Following the review, which included informal requests for indicative costs for an outsourced service, the Council is looking to progress a two stage approach.

1. Stage one is to move to option 2 to provide an in-house reduced service and secure initial savings.
2. Stage two is to explore option 3 in more depth over the next six months.

Implementing stage one and moving to option 2 in the short term allows time for the Council to identify the future specification and consider what else the private sector can offer. While the private sector costed the service at a higher cost to deliver the specification, they have access to additional paid for digital and social media channel tools.

The communications service was asked to find up to 50% of staff savings from its budget, which is £108,000. Option 2 would lead to a reduction of two staff posts which would generate staff savings of between £79,000 and £93,000, depending which posts are cut. Although this is not a 50% saving, it is not possible to remove or reduce part of a post and deliver the service. These figures include salary and employment costs.

There could be additional savings of around £9,000 if the Council moves to paperless committees, as well as savings on postage costs. The printing and photocopier contract expires in 2025 and could provide an additional £18,000 of savings if the Council moved away from print, although some of the savings would be absorbed as external printing companies would need to be used for any printed materials.

Reviewing communications through the commissioning cycle

Stage two proposes corporate communications is put through the commissioning cycle over the next six months (October 2022-March 2023) and that councillors are involved in this work, in particular discussing and defining the future outcomes for the service.

This will involve:

- **Analyse:** Analysing the evidence available and understanding what is required to deliver the service. Reviewing resources, considering the risks and what the external market offers.
- **Plan:** Establishing a clear specification of requirements and outcomes against which delivery can be assessed. Reviewing the different ways of delivering the service – this can range from internal service level agreements, performance management of internal teams through to external service provision.
- **Deliver:** Going out to tender to identify and procure service providers and partners. Implementing the changes and managing any contract.
- **Review:** Gathering feedback, identifying and delivering improvements to cost and performance and delivery of outcomes.

Over the next six months work will also start to develop a new corporate plan, which will set a clear strategic direction for the Council. Councillors will be closely involved in developing the plan, along with other key stakeholders. Communications should be aligned to the corporate objectives and the specification reviewed again, as part of the continuous commissioning cycle to ensure the Council has the right communications model to deliver the outcomes required.

This report outlines the proposed reduced service, areas explored by the service review and recommends the best way forward in the short and longer term.

2. Background

The communications service was asked to find up to 50% of staff savings from its budget and this was one of the main criteria in identifying what work could be carried out by a smaller or outsourced team, which would still deliver outcomes to meet the Council's priorities.

As part of the service review, areas of work were reviewed and assessed against core communication activities. Over time, the team has taken on responsibility for work which should be carried out by other services, for example:

- Writing job adverts.
- Monitoring social media and responding to customer enquiries.
- Reviewing and editing letters to be sent to residents.
- Internal corporate messaging.
- Emergency planning messaging.
- Staff engagement.
- Consultation.
- Administering complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

To support the transition of work to other teams, a tone of voice style guide is available to set out best practice in communicating with different audiences. Training, guidelines and support from the Communications Team will also be provided to ensure the smooth transition of tasks to other teams. There is a challenge in moving work to other teams as, while most people can communicate, not everyone is good at it. Often officers, especially those in planning and housing, tend to write in a more technical style which residents and businesses may find hard to understand.

Moving areas of work to other teams, as well as reducing what the service does, presents an opportunity to reduce the size of the team, but is also a challenge as there will be less resilience in the service.

In addition to a focus on the cost of communication, the service review also considered value for money in terms of what could be achieved under different delivery models and moving to an outcomes model.

3. Scope and approach

3.1. Scope

The service review analysed and detailed the current service, considered what could be provided in a reduced in-house service and what could be provided by an outsourced service. Please see Appendix A for details.

Communications is a corporate function used by almost all other service areas to inform, publicise, promote and market policies and services to residents, businesses and staff.

The vision and purpose of the current team is to:

- Enhance and maintain the Council's reputation through proactive communications.
- Gain understanding and support for the organisation's vision and objectives.
- Keep internal and external customers informed about priorities, projects, services and campaigns.
- Enhance external customers' experience, making use of data to target communications and influence service delivery and behaviour.
- Provide communications advice, guidance and support to all teams.
- Ensure effective internal communications and staff engagement.
- Manage responses to emergency planning and crisis communications.
- Manage complaints and freedom of information requests.

The existing team is led by a Head of Service, who is also managing the re-established policy function. Apart from the Head of Service, who is out of scope of this service review, there are five full time staff in the team with a current staffing budget of £217,000. The roles, with a brief description of what they cover, are:

Communications and Customer Experience Specialists x 2

Key tasks: Campaign creation and execution, writing and editing copy for the website and intranet, publications, e-newsletters, social media, communications advice for other officers, corporate branding, advice and guidance to officers and councillors, media relations, consultation, staff engagement, crisis communications.

Communications Officers x 2

Key tasks: Creating and sharing posts across social media channels, monitoring social media, website and intranet updates, e-newsletter creation, analytics reporting, complaints and FOI administration, as well as general administration.

Design and Print Officer x 1

Key tasks: Design and print of corporate leaflets and documents, e-newsletters, design of online graphics. Mailshots. Document accessibility. Website updates and monitoring of the search and accessibility. Analytics reporting. Online survey creation. Photocopier management and maintenance. Design and print service for external customers and partners.

There is an overall operational budget of £74,800. This includes:

- The in-house print room with an annual printing budget of £24,800.
- The contract for photocopiers and printing equipment which expires in 2025. The current cost of the contract has a budget of £30,900 a year. 90% of the remaining contract costs would have to be met if the Council decided to end the contract earlier.
- A contract with a website company for hosting and support/development, which is due to renew in 2023. There are other smaller contracts for the website search, accessibility, links and grammar checker software and an accessibility tool. The overall budget for the website is £13,200.
- A general communications budget of £5,900 for items such as e-mail newsletters, photography, corporate leaflets.

3.2. Approach

The team already had detailed plans and task lists and used these as the starting point to detail the work currently carried out or planned by the team.

The team worked together in several workshops to review this information and identify what was essential, what could move to other teams and what could stop, along with the risks of reducing the scope of the team. This is detailed in Appendix A.

In drawing up Appendix A, the team drew on a wide range of sources, networks, data and the team's own professional experience from a range of private and public organisations and knowledge of residents' expectations, council priorities and services' needs. The vision and purpose of the team was also reflected in this.

It took into account communications best practice guidance, as set out by the Local Government Association and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR).

It also reflected the best practice shared and discussed by the Surrey Communications Group, a public sector network of over 200 communication professionals. This group shares campaign, ideas and best practice, as well as works closely during any emergencies or crises for example the pandemic, cost of living, Ukraine and Operation Bridges.

The team reviewed the data available to identify what type of service could be provided within the future budget. This included social media data, e-newsletter subscriber data, residents' survey results and evaluation of previous campaigns.

In addition, a survey was carried out with key internal stakeholders to gauge their view of the service and to use the feedback to further inform the service specification. The results of the survey are in Appendix B.

The next stage was to explore option 2 (reduced in-house communications service) and option 3 (outsourced communications service) in more detail, to identify the best way to provide the future communications service. The work that was needed to do this is set out below.

Option 2:

- Identify core/essential communication activities, agree reduced service specification.
- Draw up plans to move work back to other teams including support/training.
- Reshape the service to deliver essential communications work.
- Agree new structure and review staffing.
- Interview staff for roles where necessary and/or agree redundancy or redeployment.

Option 3:

- Draw up specification for reduced, but redesigned outcomes based model for communications service.
- Test market for outsourcing based on reduced specification, but seeking outcomes based approach to communications based on Council priorities.
- Approach two councils and two private companies for indicative quote.
- Agree staff redundancy, redeployment, or TUPE.

All this work was undertaken in conjunction with the Programme Team, which includes consultants from PeopleToo. Their role was to review and challenge the approach to ensure it was robust enough, in line with the programme expectations and would deliver the savings target.

3.3. Dependencies/impact assessment

Reducing or outsourcing the service will impact other services which are used to more support from communications.

In particular, Customer Services, HR, Legal and Emergency Planning and Policy will be impacted, as officers in these teams will be responsible for work the Communications Team is currently doing. This has been discussed in meetings with the Programme Team and at Extended Management Team meetings.

It will also have an impact on external stakeholders, such as residents and businesses, as the Council's ability to engage and communicate with them will be reduced. This could lead to more contact from these stakeholders which could increase demand on other services.

Reducing the service level and output of communications could also be a reputational risk for the Council. More specific impacts for each option are detailed below.

Option 2 - reduced service in-house

If a reduced communications service is provided in-house, this would lead to a reduction of two staff posts, out of five, to generate a saving of between £79,000 and £93,000 depending which posts are cut. These figures include salary and employment costs.

The reduced service will still include support for a smaller number of specific projects and campaigns, as well as some key e-newsletters, although the quantity of all these will be reduced. It would also include website management and crisis communications.

To provide an idea of the type of projects and campaigns the team usually manages, these have recently included:

- Elections - promoting key dates, importance of voting, how and where to vote, annual canvass.
- Recycling and rubbish - new contract, new bins, how to use your bins, what and how to recycle, changes to services.
- Lottery to encourage new ticket sales and get new causes to sign up, Tandridge Together Community Fund.
- Cost of living, household support fund and business support grants.
- Backing business campaign - ran throughout the pandemic in different phases.
- Extreme weather communications - updates about services.
- Boundary commission changes.
- Operation Bridges - communication around the death of the Queen.
- Chairman's activities - promotion of events, speeches, graphics etc.
- Councillors' handbook - creation and development.
- Caterham regeneration, including Quadrant House launch – event management and communications support, Queens Park consultation.
- Installation of Northgate system and customer account.
- Support for BIDs and chamber of Commerce.
- Bids and grants - Levelling Up Fund.
- Internal communications/staff engagement – Future Tandridge Programme, staff awards, senior leader visibility, health and wellbeing.
- Local Plan and neighbourhood plans. Open Space Strategy.
- Requests for support around Ukraine, bonfires, fireworks, roadworks, unauthorised encampments, scams, anti-social behaviour, public health messaging such as contaminated water.
- Events such as promotion of Platinum Jubilee.

This is not an exhaustive list and the team is often asked to support with last minute communications.

In a reduced service, there will no longer be a daily recycling and waste newsletter, or a monthly planning committee newsletter. The information will be incorporated into one of the other remaining newsletters and available on the website.

In addition, the team is unlikely to have the capacity to develop bespoke lottery campaigns, but will use the ones provided by the lottery company. This may impact ticket sales.

The focus will be on service areas making better use of the website and signposting residents and businesses to it. The team currently accommodates most requests for communications support, but this will need to be tightly managed in the future.

There will also be a reduction in creating and supporting some of the printed materials currently provided, such as the councillors leaflet and official guide and street plan. The number of corporate leaflets will be reduced and more information made available on the website instead.

The team will no longer support service areas by writing job adverts or editing and proofing customer letters. HR will manage the corporate LinkedIn account which is used to promote the Council to job seekers and on which current jobs are shared.

The focus will be on sharing the Council's own news and information on social media channels (Facebook, Nextdoor and Twitter) and fewer partner campaigns. At the moment a large amount of material from partners is shared across the Council's channels and posted into almost 30 local Facebook groups. The reduced service will concentrate on posting into the main accounts only and occasionally more widely depending on the content.

Monitoring social media and responding to customer enquiries will transfer to the Customer Services Team, with training and support to ensure the quality of responses remains.

There will be reduced support for internal communications, with some work moving to other teams. HR will be responsible for staff engagement and staff surveys.

Consultation, including the residents' survey, along with complaints, will move to the re-established corporate policy function.

With reduced capacity in the team, there will be no option to offer a design and print service to external customers. It is anticipated there will be no printed committee reports in the future, which would also generate an operational budget saving.

The reduced service will not be able to respond as easily to last minute or unplanned requests, whether from officers or councillors. There will be less capacity to respond to any crisis.

The reduced service still includes a relatively high volume of work for the reduced number of staff available to provide it. The organisation will need to adapt its culture and approach to plan ahead to avoid last minute or additional requests, otherwise the service will not be able to meet the demand.

If the service is reduced, consideration needs to be given to what happens to the current staff employed, for example whether they will be offered redundancy or redeployment.

Option 3 - an outsourced service

Several options have been explored for an outsourced service. A reduced specification (Appendix C) was provided for external organisations to provide indicative costs and outline their approach. A range of responses was provided from councils and the private sector. Other councils costed the service they could provide at a higher cost than option 2, but with a broadly similar delivery model. The private sector options also costed the service at a higher cost to deliver the specification, with access to additional paid for digital and social media channel tools.

Aspects such as crisis communications, internal communications, contract management of the website hosting contract, accessibility compliance, photocopiers and print equipment would remain in-house, as well as commissioning, reviewing and signing off the outsourced service communications.

The budget to spend on an outsourced service is up to £108,500, which is 50% of the current team staff costs. Apart from the Head of Service who will manage the overall contract, it is likely there would need to be an officer who facilitates the day to day work required and is the internal point of contact and resource for internal communications and crisis management eg extreme weather, flooding, public health etc.

Discussions have been held with two Surrey councils, which do not have a current model in place to provide the service, but which may be open to exploring this further. Both were asked to provide an indicative quote to provide the reduced service outlined. Please see Appendix C. There are some risks with this approach in terms of other councils having different priorities, objectives and politics and the lead council's work may take precedence over Tandridge's work. There are ongoing discussions between Surrey chief executives around shared or merged services, so this way of working would support that ambition.

Two private companies, which have experience working in the public sector and working on specific campaigns with councils and the public sector, were also asked to provide an informal indicative quote to provide the services listed in the specification in Appendix C.

If the service is outsourced, consideration would need to be given to what happens to the current staff employed, for example whether they will be offered redundancy, redeployment or TUPE'd over to the new company.

One of the private companies provided a high level quote, which was based on providing officers to deliver the specification.

The other company outlined how it would meet the requirements outlined in Appendix C, including how they would use digital tools to target audiences and gather insight to develop more targeted content.

This company proposed a managed service solution with access to range of specialists to deliver the service, rather than a small, multi-skilled, dedicated team.

As with the reduced service, officers will need to carefully plan work to ensure it can be provided within the contract. An outsourced service will not be able to respond as easily to last minute requests, whether from officers or councillors.

3.4. Data analysis

The data sources used in the service review included the team's own detailed task lists and annual and weekly service planners, social media data, e-newsletter subscriber data, residents' survey results and evaluation of previous campaigns.

In terms of benchmarking with other Surrey councils the data shows communication teams range in size, from four to eleven staff, although the range of activities undertaken varies greatly, which means you are not always comparing like for like.

The internal survey carried out showed high internal customer satisfaction with the service. Details of the evaluation of the two options is given below.

Option 2 data and costings

Option 2 to provide a reduced communications service in-house would lead to a reduction of two staff posts which would generate staff savings of between £79,000 and £93,000, depending which posts are cut. Although this is not a 50% saving, it is not possible to remove or reduce part of a post and deliver the service. These figures include salary and employment costs.

Option 1: Current service staff and costs	Option 2: Reduced service staff and costs
2 specialists	1 specialist
2 communication officers	1 communication officer
1 design and print officer	1 design and print officer
£217,000	£124,000-138,000

Option 3 data and costings

Option 3 explored the provision of an outsourced service for a budget of up to £108,500. This is 50% of the current team staff costs. As part of the review, discussions have been held with two Surrey councils, about their ability to provide a reduced communications service for the Council. Both were sent a specification document (Appendix C) for consideration and asked to provide indicative costs. Neither currently has a partnership model in place to provide the service.

One of the councils provided a ballpark calculation of around £200,000 a year, including a contingency of £20,000 for additional or urgent support. They estimated the work detailed in the specification would need to be carried out by at least three people. This costing does not include:

- Consultation services or support.
- Branding and corporate identity.
- Support for the Chairman.
- Paid-for activity such as press advertising, outdoor advertising, digital ads etc.

All of which could be included at an additional cost. Since discussions began with this council, it is undertaking its own evaluation of services and is not currently able to consider this arrangement further.

The second council also provided an indicative cost of £250,000 to £300,000 a year, which would provide a resource of at least three people to deliver the specification, as well as budget for communications delivery including advertising, design and print.

Two private companies were contacted, which have experience working in the public sector and specifically providing council communications. They were asked to submit an informal indicative quote to provide the services listed in the specification (Appendix C).

One quoted £120,000 to deliver Appendix C and move to a managed service model. The company also suggested a £30,000 contingency for additional communications work. This cost was for an initial 36 months, with an option for a further 12 months. The budget is based on a monthly fixed cost fee which covers the outline specification. The quote includes design, but not printing. Unlike the other external companies, this company has not delivered a council communications service, although it has worked on large communication campaigns for the public sector.

The second agency estimated the cost to deliver the specification would be around £262,000, which would provide access to three people, plus campaigns and design. The costs include design, but not printing.

Organisation	Indicative quote	Cost over total budget available, excluding cost of internal liaison
Council 1	£200,000	£91,500
Council 2	£250,000-£300,000	£141,500 to £191,500
Agency 1	£120,000 (£30,000 contingency)	£11,500 (£21,500 with contingency)
Agency 2	£262,000	£153,500

For both options there may be additional costs if staff are made redundant or opt for voluntary redundancy.

Additional future operational savings

If there is a move to paperless committees, this could generate a saving of around £9,000, as well as savings on postage costs. The Customer Services review is looking at a hybrid outgoing mail solution, which also supports this approach.

The Council has a printing and photocopier contract expiring in 2025. There could be up to an additional £18,000 of savings if the Council moved away from print, although some of the savings would be absorbed as external printing companies would need to be used for any printed materials.

This contract also covers the photocopiers so consideration would need to be given to that part of the contract. The number of photocopiers needed in the future will depend on the number of council staff and where they are located.

4. Current service baseline

4.1. Overview of existing service

The existing services includes:

- External, corporate and internal communications, including the website and intranet.
- Customer insight and experience.
- Consultation.
- Complaints management and FOI administration.
- Design and print.

Full details of the current service are listed in Appendix A.

5. Service review analysis

The service review focused on evaluating the two options - to provide a reduced communications service in-house or an outsourced service.

It has been a useful exercise to review what the service provides now and what it could provide with a smaller team. The work has identified areas of work which other teams could or should carry out.

The information from the other councils and the private companies provided insight into alternative ways of delivering a communications service and using different digital technology to focus on resident impact.

Based on the service review findings, providing a reduced in-house communications service would generate immediate savings at the present time and is more likely to provide a more flexible, responsive service.

A reduced in-house service would be provided by the Council's existing staff who know and understand the Council, the style and tone required, its staff and the way it works, as well as the district. It would also ensure tighter control over the Council's communications.

Over the next six months the outsourced option is to be explored further and reviewed through the commissioning cycle.

This is also related to the development of the new corporate plan which will provide strategic direction and objectives and help identify the communications required to support these. Councillors will be closely involved in developing the plan, along with other key stakeholders.

6. Key recommendations and proposals

Following the service review and having evaluated the service and the options available, the recommendation is in two stages.

1. The first stage is to reduce the communications service specification and in turn the size of the team to deliver that work, to establish a smaller in-house service. This would achieve the savings target and allow the Council to maintain complete control of its communications.
2. The second stage is to put the service through the commissioning cycle over the next six months, as well as seek other savings as contracts come up for renewal or when working practices change.

7. Financial analysis

7.1 Financial analysis and profile

Moving to a reduced communications service in-house would mean a reduction of two staff posts which would generate staff savings of between £79,000 and £93,000 depending which posts are cut. These figures include salary and employment costs. While the target is for savings up to £108,000, Stage 1 delivers £79k to £93k (set out below). This will be reviewed as part of stage two including the potential to generate further savings through printing costs in 2024-2025.

Savings table £000				
Source of saving or income	22/23	23/24	24/25	Total
General Fund	47	32-46		79-93

Moving to an outsourced model would mean a reduction of up to four posts, if staff do not TUPE across to the new provider. While this would generate staff savings, which would be offset against the cost of any contract, redundancy costs would need to be factored in if staff can't be deployed.

Potential redundancy costs vary significantly according to individual circumstances and in option 3, whether TUPE would apply. A high level indicative cost would be as follows:

- Option 2: around £30,000 to £45,000.
- Option 3: up to £60,000 (assuming TUPE does not apply).

8.1 Critical success factors

	<p>Financial</p> <p>An overall reduction in net budget of 15% by 23-24 over 18 months</p> <p>An overall reduction in expenditure on 'Enabling and Back Office' functions of 15-20% by 23-24</p> <p>A higher proportion of the budget is spent on 'front-line' services and the Councils priorities</p>
	<p>Residents and Service Users</p> <p>Service Users are involved in the redesign of services</p> <p>Resident and Service User feedback and insight is used to drive service improvement</p> <p>Residents and Service Users are directed to use the least cost channel to access Council services</p>
	<p>Services</p> <p>Service Delivery models are assessed & service delivery is undertaken by the most appropriate means</p> <p>Service performance is measured, benchmarked and actively managed</p> <p>Service levels are set at an appropriate level which is aligned to Council priorities</p>
	<p>Staff</p> <p>The Council has a smaller directly employed workforce</p> <p>Managers and staff are engaged and accountable for their performance</p> <p>Staff feel valued and motivated and understand the values and behaviours expected of them</p>

Critical success factor	How will success be measured?
Overall reduction in net budget of 15% over 18 months.	Reduction in staff costs.
Overall reduction in net budget of enabling and back office of 15-20% by 23-24.	Reduction in staff costs.
Residents and service users are directed to use the least cost channel to access council services	Uptake of e-newsletters, website users, social media channels.
Service delivery models are assessed and service delivery is undertaken by the most appropriate means.	Reduced communications service in place in short term and longer term model considered for 2023/2024.
Service performance is measured, benchmarked and actively managed.	Performance indicators and ongoing review. New outcomes focused model to be developed once new corporate plan is in place.
Service levels are set at an appropriate level which is aligned to council priorities.	Agreed annual communications plan matched to corporate plan. Service plan developed.
The Council has a smaller directly employed workforce.	The Communications Team will reduce by two full time posts.
Managers and staff are engaged and accountable for their performance.	Appraisals and ongoing 121s.

8.2 Risk assessment

In adopting either option 2 or 3, the following risks have been identified.

Risk	Mitigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in control and rigour over council external communications may impact the quality of communications, reputation and branding. This could impact on council and place narrative. If there are no checks on external communications such as letters, it may lead to increased contact if the recipient is not able to easily understand the communications sent out by officers, eg if it is written in a technical or very formal way with no understanding of the audience. An inconsistent approach to communications is a political risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New corporate plan will have clear objectives and the annual communication plan will align with those. Work which falls outside these objectives will need to be agreed and resourced. Tone of voice document sets out standards for communications. Training can be provided to managers and teams to help improve written communication skills. Templates for letters and job adverts can be provided as examples for teams to follow. Effective communication across service areas to reduce risk of mixed messaging to stakeholders. If the service is outsourced, ensure there is a clear sign off process for communications to maintain quality and accuracy of content, as well as to avoid any political risk.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reduction in quality, frequency and output of messages, as well as less dialogue could lead to residents feeling less informed. This could lead to an increase in contact from customers, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tone of voice document sets out standards for communications. Training can be provided to managers and teams to help improve written communication skills.

<p>impacting Customer Services, complaints and reputation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could also lead to a drop in satisfaction rates as measured by the Residents' Survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to consider new social media and digital technology solutions, as well as targeted campaigns.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of website content is critical to channel shift. Content must be written in plain English with a low reading age to ensure anyone can understand it. Documents must be made accessible. If accessibility legislation is not met the Council can be fined by the government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended Management Team will take responsibility for their service areas ensuring the correct content is on the website and kept up to date. The tone of voice document sets out standards for communications. Documents will need to continue to be made accessible before being added to the website. Overall accessibility will need to be maintained by the team responsible for the website. Document templates could be introduced to make documents accessible at source and ensure consistency and improve quality. There would be a software cost for this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk around election communications if not carefully managed. There are strict guidelines that must be followed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure elections communications is one of the campaigns managed by the reduced service or outsourced service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak/poor internal communications can lead to staff not knowing what is going on, not feeling part of or committed to the organisation and dissatisfied in their work. All of this can impact service delivery, culture and retention of officers. Need to manage the expectations of staff and residents with this change in service, otherwise this could create more work in the longer term, for example increased contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HR team will take the lead for internal communications, supported by the Extended Management Team. Communications is everyone's responsibility. A new intranet needs to be developed and this will provide a key platform for staff communications and engagement. There will be clear communications to staff once the new service has been agreed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With a much smaller team there will be little resilience in the service if people take leave or are off sick. There will be no additional capacity for unplanned work or last minute requests from officers or councillors. With an outsourced service, the Council will have to pay extra for any work outside the agreed contract. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff will be reminded of the need to plan ahead and the service timelines for work will be shared with them. Staff will also be made aware when the team is not at full capacity. New corporate plan will have clear objectives and the annual communication plan will align with those. Work which falls outside these objectives will need to be agreed and other work rescheduled if necessary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data risk from incorrectly redacted website documents. Current team checks documents to ensure accessibility and they are redacted correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure this is part of the service level agreement (SLA) for the future service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New intranet is not developed due to capacity issues in the reduced service team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This work could be commissioned as a capital (one-off) project to secure additional staff to deliver it.

9. Conclusion

The communications service review looked at two options for providing the future service, while generating the required savings. These were to:

1. Provide a reduced in-house service.
2. Outsource the service.

Following the review, the Council is looking to progress a two stage approach.

- Stage one is to move to an in-house reduced service and secure initial savings.
- Stage two is to explore an outsourced service in more depth over the next six months.

Moving to a reduced service in the short term allows more time for the Council to identify the future specification and consider what else the private sector can offer. Keeping the communications function in-house, with a reduced team size and scope will provide the lowest cost at the current time and ensure the Council maintains control over its communications.

More work will take place over the next six months to further explore outsourcing and review the service to consider other ways of providing an efficient and effective communications service within an agreed budget. Councillors will be involved in this work.

When the current contract for printing and photocopying is due to expire, the service should be reviewed to evaluate the need for an in-house print function. The design and print function currently carries out a wide range of work including printing committee reports, creating display banners, leaflets, banners, posters, reports, as well as managing large mailing runs which include complex mail merges, multiple inserts and enveloping. As the contract does not renew until 2025 and committee papers are still required, the cost of providing this work externally has not been assessed at this stage.

In terms of next steps, due to staff vacancies, the Communications Team has already started to deliver a reduced service. Some areas of work have stopped or moved to other teams, including managers writing their own job adverts, as well as letters to the public, Customer Services is monitoring social media and responding to customer enquiries, internal corporate messaging is being sent out by each team, emergency planning messaging has moved to emergency planning, staff engagement has moved to HR, consultation and complaints has moved to Policy and FOI management to Legal.

The risks of reducing the communications service are identified in 8.2 above, but a key risk is lack of resilience within the team. With a smaller team there will be no cover for certain communications functions if officers are on leave or off sick, or any capacity for unplanned work. This means teams will need to plan ahead to ensure they secure communication support for their projects or initiatives.

The team will also be unable to respond to last minute requests from colleagues or councillors, including what might be considered high priority or urgent requests.

The need to plan communications work carefully and avoid any last minute requests would also apply to an outsourced service, as any additional work not included in the contract would be charged for, or the company may not have capacity to do as quickly as needed.

As part of the recent management restructure, the Council's policy function was centralised and corporate policy and communications are now aligned under the Head of Service. The Council is assessing the requirement for policy resourcing. There are complementary skills between policy and communications and so an element of redeployment may be possible. This could be more cost effective than redundancy and maintain experience and skills.

If the two stage approach set out in this business case is agreed, the next stage would be to consult staff about the new structure and reduce the number of communication posts. At the same time work on stage two to outsource the service would begin.

10. Equality

The Council has specific responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. Part of this is to ensure that the potential effects of decisions on those protected by the equalities legislation are considered prior to any decision being made.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (EA), provides that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the EA.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (as defined by the EA) and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status apply to the first part of the duty.

The above aspects must be considered in terms of the impact of the proposed change when drafting this business case document.

11. Appendices

- Appendix A: Communications Service specification.
- Appendix B: Internal stakeholder satisfaction survey.
- Appendix C: Specification to provide an outsourced service.