



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Communication review – annual report
Date:	18 April, 2008
Reporting Officer:	Eamon Deeny
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Relevant Background Information

Following the review of communications, it was agreed that an annual progress report be submitted to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. This report covers the period April 2007 – March 2008. Significant progress has been made in a number of areas but a number of challenges still lie ahead. This progress report summarises progress to date on our various areas of responsibility.

Key Issues

The report provides an update in the following areas:

- Efficiencies
- Corporate identity policy
- Publications/City Matters
- Graphic Design
- Website
- Media relations
- Internal communications
- Advertising

Highlights of the report include:

- The introduction of a publication policy together with the appointment of an in-house graphic designer has resulted in savings in excess of £200,000 in the current financial year.
- The decision by the council to meet the cost of City Matters by selling advertising is saving the council £140,000 per year. .
- The recommendations of the review of advertising, approved by council at its meeting on 1 April, is expected to result in savings of between £250,000 and £450,000 following the appointment of an advertising manager, whose role will be

to develop an advertising policy. Its purpose will be to develop a corporate advertising policy to reduce spending and identify revenue streams and improve use of advertising as a communications tool.

- Consideration needs to be given to increasing the size of our graphic design team with the potential to realise further savings of around £200,000.
- Belfast City Council's website is now rated consistently in the top 20 of local authority websites across the UK.
- The website, City Matters and the anti-litter publicity campaign have won awards or been shortlisted for a variety of prestigious communications awards, which enhances the reputation and image of the council.
- Consideration to be given by members of using a portion of the savings made through the advertising review to identify and develop new communication technologies and techniques to get information to hard to reach groups.
- Around 2,000 press queries were received and about 400 press releases issued during the past year. Around 95 per cent of all press queries were responded to within a day.
- An internal communications plan is being finalised to ensure that information on the corporate plan, the Review of Public Administration and other information relevant to staff, such as the Human Resources Strategy, is disseminated throughout the organisation in a timely and effective way
- It was agreed that at the time of the approval of the Review of Communications two years ago that an independent assessment be carried out to consider the effectiveness of the implementation and consider further improvements to be made to service to members and departments and efficiencies.

Resource Implications

A yet to be determined sum of money, not greater than £15,000 to be set aside for the independent review.

Recommendations

Members note the considerable progress that is being made in communications and the challenges that lie ahead.

Members to approve an independent assessment of the Review of Communications with recommendations on how to release further efficiency savings and development of proposals for a communication framework to support the delivery of the new Corporate Plan.

Key to Abbreviations

Documents Attached

Communications Review – annual report April 2007 – March 2008