

# Report to Cabinet

**23 February 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Communications and Corporate Affairs Team
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Maria Crompton - Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
<b>Director:</b>	Neil Cox Director – Business Strategy and Change
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Clair Norton, Commissioner Clair_Norton@sandwell.gov.uk  Claire Tonks, HR Consultant <a href="mailto:Claire_Tonks@sandwell.gov.uk">Claire_Tonks@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the proposed structure for a Communications and Corporate Affairs Team as set out in Appendix 2 as the basis for consultation with employees and trade unions.
2. Subject to the Director of Business Strategy and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, being satisfied that all significant concerns or issues raised during the consultation referred in recommendation 1 above being satisfactorily responded to, the revised structure for the Communications and Corporate Affairs team be approved and implemented with effect from 1 April 2022.
3. Subject to recommendations 1 and 2 above being approved, the Director – Business Strategy and Change be authorised to assimilate relevant staff pursuant to the appointment process as set out in this report (and the council’s Human Resources policies and procedures) as soon as possible after consultation responses have been considered.




4. That, in the event there are any issues arising from the consultation process on the revised structure deemed to be significant by the Director – Business Strategy and Change, a further report will be submitted to Cabinet.

## 2.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The council’s new corporate plan: Big Plans for a Great Place, sets out its ambition to deliver Vision 2030, and demonstrates a clear ambition and a key role for Communications as a core, strategic service in achieving the outcome of instilling a One Council, One Team culture across the organisation which underpins the delivery of all strategic objectives within the plan. Therefore, it is vital that a skilled, fit for purpose communications and corporate affairs team is in place to support this ambition. In addition, as the Local Government landscape and the needs of the Council change, it is important that the Communications Team adapts effectively to meet those changes and needs.

## 3.0 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><b>One Council One Team</b></p> <p>An effective corporate communications team is key to ensuring that Sandwell people get a good quality, consistent level of service, however they choose to contact the council. Our key strength as an organisation is our staff and their commitment to give Sandwell people the very best. A skilled, diverse, motivated and healthy workforce is key to this success. This reorganisation will support staff to drive creativity, collaboration and transformation, creating a skilled, diverse, motivated and healthy workforce, which is key to the success of the Corporate Plan.</p>
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## 4.0 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 This report sets out the proposal to reorganise the structure of the existing communications team, within the Business Strategy and Change Directorate, to ensure the team is both set up and resourced to deliver the wide range of activities required of an effective corporate communications team. As a result of the senior management restructure, the “communication” functions currently in place across the organisation have been realigned into the Business Strategy and Change Directorate.



In order to undertake a meaningful review of those existing communications arrangements and make recommendations for a future, fit for purpose strategic service, external support was commissioned via Promodo Ltd in February 2021. The outcome of that review has informed the recommendations detailed below which set out a new approach to communications for Sandwell.

- 4.2 Whilst Communications as a function is generally viewed positively across the council, with a broad range of skills and experience within the current Communications Team, and good working relationships both internally and with partners, the review undertaken by Promodo found that existing arrangements offer only a partial coverage of the range of communication activities required, with deficits in areas such as internal communications, marketing and corporate affairs. In addition, with no permanent, professional communications leadership at present, communications is currently viewed as tactical rather than strategic, leading to missed opportunities for Sandwell.
- 4.3 The LGA Head of Communications annual survey includes statistics for the numbers of communications staff by type of authority, with the average for a Metropolitan authority being 18.1 FTE. Communications within Sandwell is delivered at present by a Corporate Communications team, comprising 10.6 FTE as demonstrated at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 The new Corporate Plan has a clear framework of outcomes, and a more strategic approach to communications is required to support the achievement of these aims. It is therefore proposed that a communications team that can offer a full range of strategic and tactical communications is needed. This will broaden the current service and introduce a new way of working, with an emphasis on the internal, client side and more integrated external communications, in addition to a greater focus on forward planning, outcomes and impact and being able to measure and evaluate communications work.
- 4.5 The recommendation is to create a Communications and Corporate Affairs team working across five areas. These five areas (and the sub-disciplines within each), will offer a much-enhanced strategic communications service to the council.



<b>News</b> Sandwell Newsroom Media relations Local, regional, national media Issues management Media training	<b>Marketing</b> Marketing - Corporate Marketing – People Marketing – Place Insight Behaviour change / social marketing	<b>Internal Communications</b> Employee engagement Employer/recruitment brand Change communications
<b>Digital Communications &amp; Creative Services</b> Web Social media Integrated digital strategy Video and animation content development Corporate identity Brand development Graphic design	<b>Corporate Affairs</b> Strategic brand External relations Reputation & influencing Stakeholder communications Member communications Speech writing, copy writing and content writing Crisis communications	

4.6 This refreshed approach to communications will:

- Introduce a strategic and unified approach to internal & external communications
- Build confidence in communications as a strategic service
- Be evidence and insight based
- Provide high quality information, at the right time and in the right place
- Increase awareness of what the council is doing and ensure the council receives recognition for action
- Influence attitudes & opinion
- Influence behaviour.



## 4.7 Proposed Structure

The proposed structure at Appendix 2 reflects the future priorities of the council and the way in which communications as a discipline is changing and evolving and is designed to support the delivery of the five key areas outlined above. Additional resource has also been added to the structure to ensure that the resource within the team is appropriate to the type and size of authority Sandwell MBC is.

## 5.0 Implications

### 5.1 Resources - Financial Implications

The current Communications Team staffing establishment costs are £536,900 per annum. The proposed establishment outlined in Appendix 2 would cost £842,000 per annum which is an increase of £305,100 per annum. Please see table below:

Grade		Current FTE	Current Budget	Proposed FTE	Proposed Budget	Variance
I		1.00	67,100	1.00	67,700	600
H		0.00	0	1.00	62,200	62,200
G		8.00	425,600	7.00	378,700	(46,900)
F		1.00	42,100	2.00	91,400	49,300
E		0.00	0	6.00	232,800	232,800
D		0.00	0	0.00	0	0
C		0.00	0	1.00	26,400	26,400
B		0.54	13,100	0.00	0	(13,100)
<b>Total</b>		<b>10.54</b>	<b>547,900</b>	<b>18.00</b>	<b>859,200</b>	<b>311,300</b>
Vacancy Rate @ 2%	#		(11,000)		(17,200)	(6,200)
<b>Budget Required</b>			<b>536,900</b>		<b>842,000</b>	<b>305,100</b>



HRA Contribution @ 25%		136,200		213,600	77,400
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- 5.2 A contribution of 25% of the staffing budget is made from the HRA. This contribution would increase by £77,000 to fund the new structure.
- 5.3 In consultation with the Section 151 Officer the additional budget required to fund this proposal was put forward as a spend pressure for 2022/23 and included in the draft budget proposals which were approved by Cabinet in December 2021.

## 6.0 Resources - Staffing Implications

- 6.1 Implementing the proposed structure will result in the following staffing implications:

Grade	Current	Proposed	Difference
I	1	1	0
H	0	1	+1
G	8	7	-1
F	1	2	+1
E	0	6	+6
D	0	0	0
C	0	1	+1
B	0.6	0	-0.6
Total	10.6	18	+7.4FTE

6.2

Structure charts outlining the proposed future staffing structure for each can be found at Appendices 1 and 2. It is proposed that the go live date for this structure is 1 April 2022 to allow the

necessary HR processes required to implement the structure to take place. Following the implementation of the new structure it is proposed that the service area is rebranded as a Communications and Corporate Affairs team which will replace the current Communications Team.



- 6.3 The newly created posts within this restructure of the Communication team will be ring fenced to the staff directly affected by the restructure.
- 6.4 To assist with redeployment, should this be required, those officers whose posts are subject to deletion will be placed 'at risk of redundancy'. The HR Resourcing team will work with individuals to identify and match suitable alternative vacancies where necessary.

## 7.0 Consultation (Customers, staff and Stakeholders)

- 7.1 Engagement sessions have taken place with the affected staff group and key stakeholders prior to the finalisation of this proposal. The feedback received has informed the final proposal and formal consultation will be undertaken accordingly and proportionately with the affected staff group.
- 7.2 The consultation proposed within this document is structured by the following legal position:
- 7.3 The statutory instrument that underpins the duty to consult is defined in the Local Government Act 1999 (Section 3) and the Statutory Guidance issued under it. Both the Act and Guidance state that Councils are under a duty to consult.
- 7.4 The consultation with the effected workforce will have to comply with the legal principles that relate to consultation, namely the Gunning principles:
- Consultation should be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.
  - Sufficient reasons for the proposals to permit intelligent consideration.
  - Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
  - The product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account.

## 8.0 Legal and Governance

Under section 188 of the Trade Union labour Relations Act 1992 for the purposes of consultation the employer must satisfy and disclose in writing the following:



### **a) The reason for the proposal**

To achieve the ambition and key role set out in the council's corporate plan: Big Plans for a Great Place for Communications to be a core, strategic service, requiring a skilled, fit for purpose communications and corporate affairs team.

### **b) The total number of employees of any such description employed by the employer at the establishment in question**

The structure charts in appendices 1 and 2 set out the current number and banding of posts within the service area.

### **c) The number of agency workers working temporarily for and under the supervision of the employer**

There are no agency employees who are affected by the proposals

### **d) Those on fixed term contracts will be treated no less favourably than permanent employees pursuant to the Fixed Term Employees Prevention on Less Favourable Treatment Regulations 2002.**

The principles of the Equality Act 2010 will be adhered to in respect of applying Council Policies. Employment legislation and contractual provisions will be adhered to in implementing the proposal in this report.

The implementation of any cabinet decision should not result in the violation of any person's rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The consultation will ensure that any potential violation is identified and mitigated.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) – When making a decision as to changes in service provision the local authority must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 (public sector equality duty). The protected characteristics to which the duty applies includes age as well as disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief and sex.





## 9. Equality

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. It concluded that the restructure of the Communications Team would not adversely affect equality on the basis of any of the protected characteristics. Any unforeseen adverse impacts will be identified through monitoring processes and statistical / other data analysis.

<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	Increasing the resource available for external communications and providing media updates on a wide variety of council initiatives increases the team's ability to promote the health and well being of the borough's population.
<b>Social Value:</b>	By investing in the team and structuring its resource appropriately the team will be better positioned to keep residents informed of matters of interest related to council business and activities and issues affecting their communities.

## 10.0 Risk

10.1 The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with to identify and assess any significant risks associated with the proposal. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks. Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that there are no significant risks associated with this proposal.

10.2 If the report is not approved then there is a risk to the services in the context of both value for money and their ability to meet changing needs and demands.

## 11 Alternative Options

11.1 Officers have considered all alternative options as a result of the review undertaken by Promodo Ltd.



11.2 **Option 1** – Do nothing – continue with the existing communications team arrangements.

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
There will be no immediate impact for staff	There will be a missed opportunity to deliver a more strategic and corporate service
There will be no immediate budgetary implications	There will not be a fit for purpose communications and corporate affairs provision for the Local Authority
	There will be a negative impact on the ability of the Authority to achieve the framework of outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan
	Only partial coverage of the strategic elements required will be delivered as a result of a continued deficit in resource
	There will continue to be insufficient capacity within the existing team to respond to the level of demand

11.3 **Option 2** – Engage with other Local Authorities to create a `shared` service

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
Economies of scale offer the opportunity to generate increased efficiency from resources	Would still need to increase investment in the staffing resource in the team given the comparison between the size of the current team and other met councils.
	Potential impact on existing staff allocation and/or grades as a result of a shared service
	More complex local and regional arrangements can reduce public understanding of what the council does and reduce recognition for action
	No specific targeted place shaping/ branding agenda can lead to missed opportunities
	Potential loss of ownership within a shared arrangement resulting in missed opportunities



	Potential dilution of locally driven messaging and local knowledge and ownership
	Significant timescales required to undertake procurement and implementation of a shared resource, resulting in an extended period under resourcing during this process.
	Potential lack of appetite from other local authorities to combine resources

11.4 **Option 3** – Restructure the existing communications team, adding additional resource to create a Communications and Corporate Affairs Team, as recommended by the external review

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
Existing staff retained	Budgetary implications
Increased opportunities to deliver a more strategic and corporate service which is fit for purpose and value for money	
Ability to support the Authority to achieve the framework of outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan	
There will be a negative impact on the ability of the Authority to respond appropriately to opportunities and threats.	
Increased resource will enable increased productivity and improve responsiveness and value	
Future proofed service able to meet the challenges anticipated post pandemic	
Sufficient resource for the size and type of Local Authority, as recommended by the LGA Head of Communications Annual Survey	
Opportunity to increase skills and experience of existing staff	



11.5 3 Options were explored, and the advantages and disadvantages can be seen in the above tables. Based on the above summary, Option 3 is recommended within this report.

## 12 Conclusions and summary of reasons for the recommendations

12.1 This report sets out the proposals for the restructure of the existing communications team, within the Business Strategy and Change Directorate, with a view to implementing a new team structure focused on the management of both communications and corporate affairs 1 April 2022.

12.2 The council's new corporate plan: Big Plans for a Great Place, sets out its ambition to deliver Vision 2030, and demonstrates a clear ambition and a key role for communications to underpin the delivery of the strategic objectives outlined within the plan. Therefore, it is vital that a skilled, fit for purpose communications and corporate affairs team is in place and that it is structured and resourced appropriately to meet the changing needs of the organisation in future.

## 13. Appendices

Appendix 1 Current Structure

Appendix 2 Proposed Structure

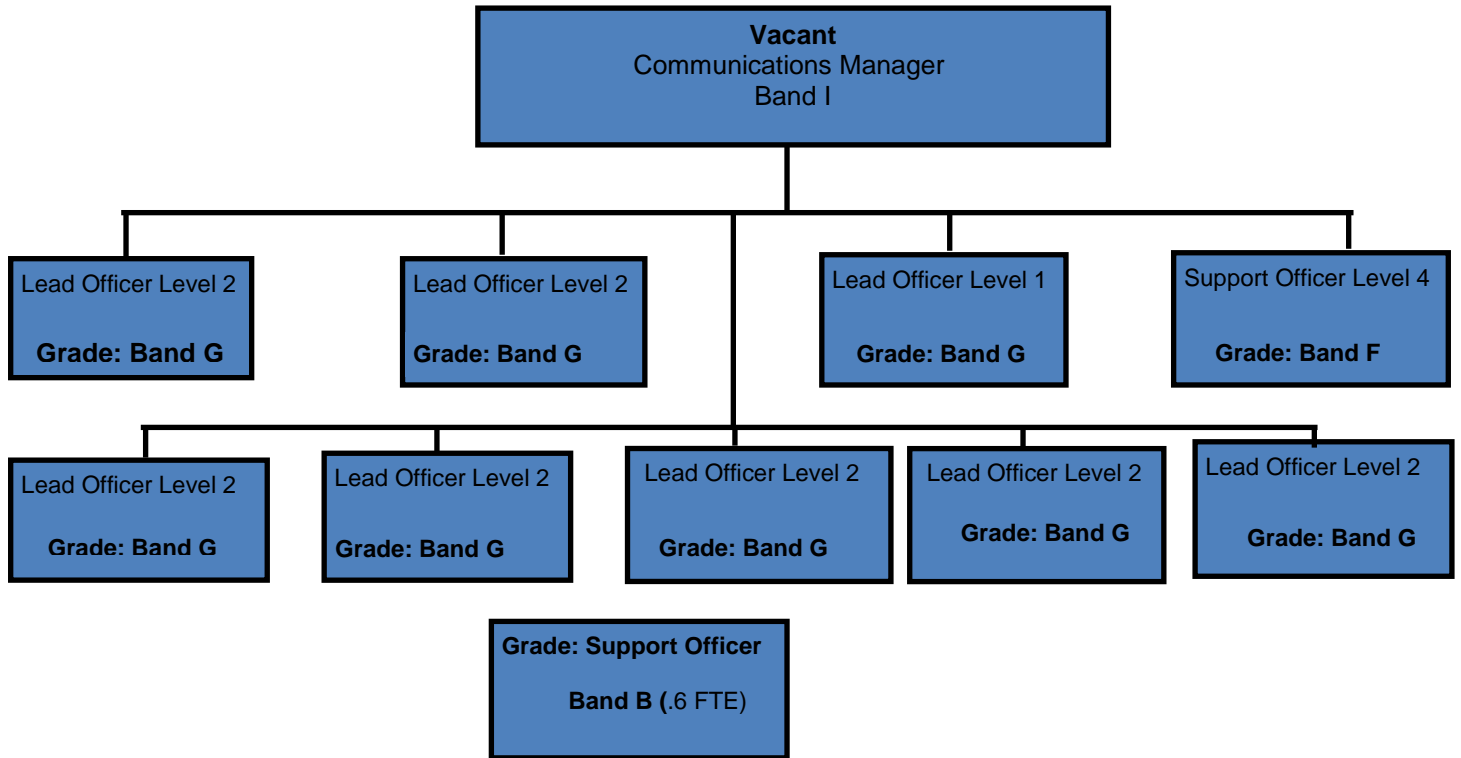
## 14. Background Papers

None



# Appendix 1

## Current Communications Team Structure



## Appendix 2

### Proposed Communications and Corporate Affairs Structure

