

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Gavin Elsey		
Contact Officer(s):	Caroline Parsons, Head of Corporate Communications	Tel. 452313	

Director of Communications – Peterborough Public Services

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Councillor Gavin Elsey, Cabinet Member for Regional and Business Engagement (responsible for communications)	Deadline date :
<p>1. Employment committee give approval to advertise for a director of communications to support the city council, NHS Peterborough and Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Trust in line with the proposals to create a shared communications service for public services in Peterborough.</p> <p>2. That the committee approve the attached job description and person specification for the director of communications.</p> <p>3. That the committee authorise the Chief Executive to recruit to this post.</p>	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Employment Committee following the development of a proposal to share communications services across Peterborough City Council, NHS Peterborough and Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Trust as recommended by Councillor Elsey as the Cabinet member responsible for communications.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposal for the shared service and specifically highlight the need for a director to lead the new team.

2.2 This report is for Employment Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.3.1.5 To consider, and recommend appropriate actions where necessary in response to, executive proposals relating to changes within a Department's/Division's structure which involve substantial changes in the responsibilities of first and second tier posts.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	
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4. A SHARED COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE FOR PETERBOROUGH'S PUBLIC SERVICES

4.1 The total place agenda places emphasis on exploring ways in which public sector organisations can work together to provide services collaboratively. Increasingly challenging public sector budgets mean that innovative and more efficient ways of providing services – particularly support services – must be found.

4.2 In a peer review of city council communications carried out by Westminster City Council in 2006, it was recommended that a future 'gold service' would be to co-ordinate communication across the city.

- 4.3 Communications is a key area in which a shared service model can lead to a more efficient and cost-effective service.
- 4.4 Public services are working increasingly to one shared agenda. The Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement reflect this agenda. It is almost certain that whatever may replace these strategies in the near future, whichever party is in government, will further strengthen this move towards increasingly shared public services.
- 4.5 A co-ordinated team centralises expertise. Campaigns which achieve local objectives can be delivered in a co-ordinated way rather than in separate organisations which will eliminate duplication and maximise joint working.

The public will not be bombarded with variations on the same message from different organisations, which leads to frustration, poor perception of value for money and eventually disengagement.

Additionally, combined consultation and engagement functions will engage across themes rather than organisations, achieving better results and more meaningful information about customers.

- 4.6 In a bigger team, there is room for specialism without creating vast additional resource.

A single internal communications team will help to instil a sense of shared priorities and agendas between organisations.

- 4.7 The immediate efficiency is in the provision of one overall head of service – although it is recommended this is elevated to director level.

Within the communications team, it is proposed to create a number of teams which will have a mixture of discipline and sector expertise.

By working closely together as one organisation, there will be efficiency in the delivery of campaigns, reduced duplication and better synergy between the communications of each organisation.

- 4.8 Additionally, the increased purchasing power of a bigger organisation will enable us to access preferential rates (such as advertising) much more quickly.

- 4.9 It is proposed that the director would have a place on the GPP board along with the chief executives of the individual organisations.

- 4.10 It is recommended that, with such a far reaching project, the stages be phased. There are a number of logical phases as follows:

Transition phase – from January 2010

Clearly this is a big change for the organisations involved. A recommended transitional model could see the appointment of the communications director at an early stage, who would be responsible for bringing together the organisations concerned, establishing communications networks etc

This phase can begin immediately in order to engage and involve existing senior staff and the existing communications teams.

Phase one – March 2010

This will be the co-ordination of communications activity, including membership for the hospital, and teams.

Phase two –June 2010

There has already been considerable work carried out at the Solutions Centre in the drawing together of consultation and engagement teams. With the approval of the council,

hospital and PCT, these disciplines can be formally integrated very quickly after the other communications functions. Further discussion is required around this area.

Phase three – September 2010

Discussions on joint FOI provision are already underway between the PCT and city council. We can link the hospital into these discussions immediately with a target for a September co-ordination. This may or may not sit within the communications function.

Phase four – 2011

Complaints and PALS – to be discussed.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Discussions have already taken place with the communications teams at the city council, hospital and NHS Peterborough, although there has been no formal HR consultation at this stage.
- 5.2 This paper only seeks approval for the advertising for a director. It does not seek approval on the full restructure which will, of course, be undertaken in line with the HR policies of the three organisations concerned.

5. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The recruitment of a director of communications to provide a more efficient shared communications service for Peterborough's public services.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendation is proposed on the basis of increased efficiency and better customer service. It also pre-judges likely moves to share more services across public services, of which communications is a prime candidate.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Another option would be to simply re-recruit heads of service to the three organisations as per the status quo.

8. IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 HR – in the absence of internal candidates, the process of recruiting a director of communications would commence immediately.
- 8.2 Financial – the shared service would be delivered within the combined communications budgets of the participating organisations.
- 8.3 Legal – further legal work is required on the service level agreements between the participating organisations.
- 8.4 ICT – initial work is underway with ICT to smooth the integration of council and NHS Peterborough teams. Further work will be required.
- 8.6 LAA targets – the shared service should enable more effective community engagement and focus on LAA targets and outcomes.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.

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