



TOWER HAMLETS PUBLICITY PLAN 2015-16

INTRODUCTION

The Council recognises the importance for local residents, staff and the democratic process that there is full understanding of and confidence in all aspects of its operation. It is our duty to ensure that residents, staff, key stakeholders, media and the wider public have a clear understanding of the council's role, the services we provide and the way in which we deliver continuous improvement and value for money.

An effective communications plan for the Council has a number of key purposes. To achieve our Community Plan vision of improving the quality of life of all who live and work in the borough requires us to communicate with and engage local people. In addition, effective communications activity:

- promotes openness and transparency in the work of the council;
- promotes key messages to achieve policy goals around ways in which residents can live more healthily; improve their employment chances; help us tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and create a greener, more sustainable environment.
- underpins accountability and effective reporting to residents about our delivery in response to local priorities;
- engages residents in key activities and encourages their feedback and engagement;
- promotes cohesion and cultural interchange; and
- builds effective working relationships and ensures staff feel informed and motivated.

To achieve these aims, the Council has a detailed Forward Planner (Appendix 1) which sets out the wide range of communications activity planned on a monthly basis over the course of a year. In addition, this cover report highlights the key strategic and operational communication priorities which the council proposes to focus on over the next year to ensure that our communications and publicity activity is effective in achieving the above goals and delivers best value. These areas are set out in an action plan format within the Council's Best Value Plan to respond to the Secretary of State Directions of December 2014.

The key aim for the 2015/16 communications are to re-focus the Council's media profile around positive messages in pursuit of the key purposes outlined above. To achieve this, there are six key issues that we will focus on during 2015/16.

First, we will build our publicity activity around the **Community Plan**, currently the focus of widespread borough wide and stakeholder consultation. This will ensure our communications activity is focused around the areas agreed as priorities for the Council and its partners..

Second, we will focus on communicating **value for money** as we operate in an era of intense internal and external scrutiny. Third, the current **Communications Protocol** will be strengthened and further disseminated providing a robust, clearly understood mechanism to ensure that the work of, and relations between Communications, the Mayor's office, council officers and elected members is carried out transparently and appropriately at all times.

Fourth, in this **general election** year, work is underway with the Electoral commission, the police and other stakeholders to address difficulties which arose in previous campaigns. Communications will play a central role in ensuring the smooth, efficient running of the poll and count and build public confidence in our democratic processes.

Fifth, a new far-reaching **internal communications** function, in partnership with the Council's Human Resources, will shape organisational culture, delivering key messages and engaging with staff.

Sixth, we will build a stronger focus on **best value** in the way in which we deliver our communications function, challenging existing models, exploring the potential for new and existing revenue streams and considering the best use of the Council's overall spend on Communications to achieve objectives.

We will base our activities on available research such as media monitoring and resident and staff surveys. Above all the purpose of this plan is simple; to increase public awareness of the bread and butter services provided by Tower Hamlets and enable residents to have a real informed say and improve local accountability.

THE 2015 COMMUNITY PLAN

The developing Community Plan (2015 onwards) is well advanced following an extensive consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders. The plan will build upon existing partnership work retaining themes that partners have organised themselves around for some years. They are:

- A great place to live
- A fair and prosperous community
- A safe and cohesive community
- A healthy and supportive community

Tower Hamlets is a place of immense opportunity, but poverty and inequality can stop local people achieving their full potential. The community plan aims to bring different parts of the community together, encouraging positive relationships and tackling divisions between communities – as well as providing strong leadership, involving people and giving them the tools and support to improve their lives.

Partnership working to pursue these priorities is well embedded and overseen by a range of partnership bodies.

To build on and complement this work, the Community Plan sets out proposed cross-cutting partnership priorities for the 4 years from 2015. Using this plan, partners will work together to harness the efforts of all partners and accelerate progress in four important areas.

As the plan develops, communications activity will 'wrap around' it ensuring that our publicity reflects and informs residents' priorities. The communications forward planner at appendix 1 is the beginning of this process setting out as programme to support each of the four priorities.

Our approach will be to focus on long-term, solid, evidence based reputation building designed to build public confidence in the council and our services.

TEN NEW GOALS FOR 2015/16

The Tower Hamlets model of communications has, by necessity, been reactive and media relations driven. Much of our everyday work, supporting frontline services and promoting key messages to promote policy objective continues largely unheralded and it is our aim to develop and improve this service development role.

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We will continue to develop and improve our two-way communications in a linked, digital, tweeted world where power is flowing back to communities. A number of key activities are planned to further improve communications. They are described below and included within our best value action plan.

- 1. Strategic Review:** A root and branch critical appraisal of the services provided by Communications will be undertaken. Along with our customers and other stakeholders, we will look dispassionately at how and why we provide services, analyse our relative performance and draw up plans embedded in best value principles.

To achieve this we will;

- challenge why, how and by whom a service is being provided
- secure comparison with the performance of others (including local authorities) across a range of relevant indicators, taking into account the views of both service users and suppliers
- consult local residents, service users, **elected members**, partners and businesses in the setting of new performance targets.

We will use this to develop a new Communications Strategy alongside a refreshed Communications protocol.

- 2. Digital Focus:** We will accelerate the delivery of our digital communications strategy. We want to improve the ability of people to interact efficiently with Tower Hamlets, reduce unnecessary transaction costs and identify new ways of engaging with the community. Building on the learning from the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy, we will target digital activity appropriately based on the different needs and motivations of sections of our community.

In doing this, we will consider whether we can move over time to digital communication methods to replace our existing paper based methods and East End Life. This would need to be a gradual and staged process, recognising the level of digital exclusion in elements of our current population.

Procurement of a new web content management system (CMS) will support our aims by providing a much more accessible, user-friendly web platform for engagement and transaction. Simple to use and content-rich, our digital offering will extend the reach and penetration of our messages and the quality and quantity of our stakeholder engagement.

- 3. East End Life review:** The newspaper is currently the council's primary communication / community cohesion tool and is highly valued by local residents. East End Life continues to be the most cost-effective way for the council to communicate information about council services and community cohesion in Tower Hamlets, and at the same time fulfilling its statutory duties in relation to public notices and advertising. A review of East End Life review was conducted in 2011 which concluded that: *"Further to an analysis of advertising costs with alternative newspapers, the 2011 review referred to above, found that the closure of the publication would cost between £600,000 and £2.1million. The cost of placing statutory notices in the main local newspaper would be £635,007, rising to over £2.1m for a 'suite' of packages in a range of local newspapers to increase reach."* We will revisit the findings of this review and a range of options around frequency, financing and delivery, including moving to digital platforms over time, will be explored.
- 4. Refreshing Internal Communications:** We will work with Human Resources to build team based communications structures enabling colleagues at all levels to improve communication within and across directorates. A network of communications champions will facilitate two-way communication up and down the council and Communications will support departmental newsletters, "road shows" and

intranet activity. The primary aim is to build a knowledge-sharing culture across departmental and organisational boundaries

- 5. Campaign Planning and Co-ordination:** The service has a detailed media Forward Planner – a summary of the key campaigns planned is attached at Appendix a). The Planner, which is being extended to cover the 3 years ahead, is a flexible and developing document linked to a new suite of media monitoring and engagement tools. A key campaign underpinning this year's work will be a 50th Anniversary Campaign. From April 2015 a range of events will take place (independently and with London Council colleagues) to mark the founding of Tower Hamlets Council. Our plans will be self-financing or, where possible, revenue raising in partnership with appropriate organisations including the media.

A new web-based print and design tool will transform commissioning of materials for internal customers improving efficiency, reducing costs and ensuring uniformly high standards across the organisation. To ensure value for money, the Council has just completed the procurement of a new print and design framework which will enable the council to strategically manage all of its external print and design-related suppliers, and to ensure that all printed publicity and design output complies with procurement processes and the council's branding and communications protocols. In practice, the framework will be supported by a web-based print and design project management system, Panacea, which is being used to centralise and manage all communications jobs involving print or design in one system.

This will be supported by an improved Communications Protocol and Style Guide enabling greater freedom of action for specific services and specifying the roles and responsibilities of Communications staff, Mayoral Advisers, Officers and members

- 6. Income optimisation and value for money:** The finances of the Communications function will be reviewed with a new emphasis on revenue generation. This will include development of options with the aim to make communications a self-financing function within three years. This means real new money from external sources eliminating costs to the council and therefore our residents. For example, we will explore opportunities for Tower Design, our in-house design agency which runs at a small-profit, to be put on a commercial footing to fully exploit opportunities and become a significant profit centre for the council. In addition, we will review Council wide spend on a range of publicity functions, including advertising and poster sites, to ensure a co-ordinated approach which supports our strategic objectives and priorities.

The Panacea system outlined above will also enable the council to interrogate prices from all suppliers in real-time for any given print job specification, to support continuous benchmarking of prices, stimulate competitive pricing and produce best value.

Budget information for 2014/15 is included at Appendix b). Costs and income will be reviewed to inform the strategic approach for the service for 2015/16 and beyond.

- 7. Promoting Cohesion and equality:** We will explore ways of hearing from the local community and our staff to ensure our work actively promotes equality and diversity issues and builds community cohesion and engagement.
- 8. Accountability and performance:** Current performance of the Communications function is measured against basic media monitoring data on a quarterly basis. The work of the team will be evaluated on a monthly basis with new key deliverables developed and reported on in a regular performance report.

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We will partner and benchmark with the best across the UK and internationally setting the standard for local government communications

9. **Supporting Managers:** We will provide communications learning and development for managers to cover compliance with the Communications Protocol, and developing skills in areas such as presentation, broadcast and social media.
10. **Mayor's Media Advisors:** The Mayor appoints two media advisors on a flexible basis to advise him and the Cabinet on local community media including BME and Bangladeshi media and to work with him to raise the national profile and awareness of Tower Hamlets and highlight the borough's investment and development potential. The need for these advisors reflects the disproportionate national media interest in the Mayor in his role as Mayor as opposed to in the Council more generally. This support has been competitively tendered to ensure value for money. The appointees will, as part of their induction, be fully briefed by the Interim Deputy Service Head for Communications in relation to the Council's Communications Protocol and their responsibilities. Safeguards are being developed to ensure that the appointees abide by the Protocol and that the work they undertake is formally recorded and signed off at Service Head or Corporate Director level within the Council to ensure that it represents legitimate local authority expenditure. Contract management of the Mayors' advisors will be the subject of audit by the Section 151 Officer and reported to the Audit Committee.

Appendix A

Planned Communications Activity

Communications activity is driven by the council's priorities, as outlined in the Community Plan. The Communications Team works closely with Corporate Directors and their Directorate Management Teams (DMTs) to develop communications planning documents which are collated and maintained by the Communications Service. These are updated regularly and reported to DMTs. They are also reported to the Mayor on a fortnightly basis as part of the Mayor's Briefing.

All communications activity is based upon the principles of openness and transparency and in line with the Communications Protocol and the Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity.

The Communications Service follows a 'twin track' approach to communications planning in order to be responsive to external demand and service need, and in recognition of the fast moving news agenda. Our planning documents are designed to be flexible and are updated on a regular basis.

The full Communications planning document reflects the scale of the work the service undertakes. The current document (with details of work from February 2015 to January 2016) contains over 200 projects and work streams spanning all council directorates. This plan shows how work is linked to Community Plan themes and identifies lead officers within Communications and the relevant service. It outlines planned activity across all communications channels (including campaigns, marketing, consultation, social media and internal communications) and will continue to grow as the year goes on. A summary of the key upcoming campaigns is set out in this appendix.

Regular annual communications activity

There are regular communications activities that take place each year. These promote the excellent services provided by the council, detail how residents can access services, provide useful information and advice or celebrate achievements. They span all directorates and include (but are not limited to):

Education, Social Care and Wellbeing

- Regular Public Health campaigns, including National No Smoking Day, Dry January, New Year, New You, Cancer Screening promotions – calls to action, information and advice.
- GCSE and A Level results coverage and school admissions figures.
- Mayor's Education Award (and MEA Ceremony) – celebrations of achievement and promotion of award to young people.
- Holiday events/positive activities for Young People

Development and Renewal

- Updates on numbers of people helped into employment/apprentices and advice about how to access related council/partner services.
- Milestones for key developments including Blackwall Reach, Watts Grove.
- Mayor's Business Forum and work to support inward investment, plus partnership working with key organisations including Canary Wharf.

Communities, Localities and Culture

- Regular recycling and Clean/Green messages including 'calls to action'.
- Community Safety Walkabouts and related reassurance messages

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- Work of the THEOs
- Season of Bangla Drama and wider cultural offer.

Law, Probity and Governance

- Annual Update of the Register of Electors (and in election years detailed communications work around elections)
- Holocaust Memorial Day, Remembrance Sunday events
- LGBT History Month
- Leading on consultation and resident engagement

Resources

- Annual budget consultation including promotion of budget roadshows
- Regular updates on anti-fraud work.

Key campaigns and activities for 2015/16

As at February 2015, several projects/campaigns have been identified as priorities for the Communications Service for the year ahead.

Event/activity	Key messages/aims	Timeframe
Digital inclusion campaign	Becoming an 'online borough': enabling residents to access the benefits of being online.	Ongoing (continues from 2014/15)
Whitechapel Vision	Ongoing work on award-winning regeneration plans for Whitechapel with related information about new homes, facilities and jobs. To include interactive hoardings, promotion of new Civic Hub and event with Microsoft.	Ongoing April May
Care Act	Clarity about the changes in the way services are provided and what it means for local people. Related information, advice and signposts to support.	From March
Community Plan consultation	Encouraging residents' views in the development of the new Community plan	From March
Foster care campaign	Large scale marketing campaign to increase number of foster carers (link to National Fostering Fortnight)	April
Parliamentary	Maximising voter registration,	May 7

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Election	outlining process, being clear on anti-fraud messages, details of candidates, how to vote and clear messages around results. To include social media plan with partners including Police.	
Budget consultation	Longer term budget consideration in light of financial challenges for local government, including interactive budget planning tool.	From May
Blackwall Reach	Messages around new affordable homes to include promotion of topping out ceremony in May, and subsequent consultation on Phase 2 of the development. Additional promotion around opening of community centre.	May
BME Adoption Campaign	Large scale marketing campaign to increase number of BME families adopting.	March
School openings	Positive messages around school openings (Woolmore Primary School) and expansions (Stebon Primary) with related information about improved school places and facilities for local people.	From Spring onwards
Shop Local	Extension of the 'Small Business Saturday' campaign to promote local business and encourage inward investment	October – December 2016

Appendix b Budget overview

The proposed communications budget for **2015-16** is set out below.

Expenditure

Employees Total (salaries/fees)	£1,230,658.00
Transport-Related Expenditure Total	£2,000.00
Supplies & Services Total	£515,224.00
Third Party Payments Total	£350,212.00
Support Services Total	£456,334.00
Expenditure Total	£2,554,428.00

Income

Transfer / Recharges	£1,3205,428.00
EEL Income from external sales	£611,000.00
EEL Income from internal charging	£618,000.00
Income Total	£2,553,212

THE CURRENT POSITION

The annual communications budget is based on the previous year's real income / expenditure figures adjusted to account for, for example, savings from the Council's efficiency programme. The trend over the past five years has seen a real-terms reduction in the budget of 3-5%.

Communications spend currently falls in four main areas:

- **Corporate communications** delivered by the media, internal communications and digital teams. Associated costs are almost entirely for staffing and equipment in this area
- **Directorate communications.** Publicity budgets are currently held and segmented across individual council departments and services and principally spent on publicity activity such as print, design, marketing and advertising services. In general, the communications department are commissioned to deliver this work. This work is largely funded from services' own budgets. Initial analysis indicates that spend on design, print and publicity not delivered via East End Life or commissioned through the Communications service represented £5-700K in 2014/15.
- **East End Life (EEL)** represents a significant proportion of this budget and is planned on a cost-neutral basis. That is, the print, production, distribution and other costs of £1.2 million are matched by income from external advertising sales and internal charges for statutory notices

and departmental publicity. **Statutory notices** are projected to yield **£228,000** representing **37%** of internal income or **19%** of total income generated by EEL

- **Mayor's media advisors:** The Mayor also commissions advisory support to advise him and the Cabinet on local community media including BMT and Bangladeshi media and to work with him to raise the national profile and awareness of Tower Hamlets and highlight the borough's investment and development programme. This includes training and supporting the Mayor and Cabinet Members in their roles as media spokespeople. This has been put out to tender to maximise value for money. It is envisaged that the cost for this support in 2015/16 will be £130K.

Budget review

A critical appraisal of all communications functions, resources and activities is proposed during the early part of 2015/16 as outlined in the best value plan. Improvements already planned include:

- Reviewing potential savings from increasing the digital focus of Council communications, including as alternative options for East End Life.
- Best value and cost-effective procurement driven through the council's new **print and design framework**, to be launched and embedded from April 2015. This will enable the council to strategically oversee all of its external print and design-related activity, including the estimated £5-700K currently being delivered outwith the corporate framework, and to ensure that all printed publicity and design is channelled through the Council's Communications team to ensure the output complies with procurement processes and the council's branding and communications protocols.
- All Directorate projects supported by a clear communications brief to ensure that any planned expenditure is fit for purpose in meeting the aims and objectives of the council and can be combined with other publicity projects where appropriate to reduce unnecessary print spend.
- Planning a steady reduction in the council's contribution towards its publicity and community engagement activities through the growing new and existing revenue streams from external sources.