

Committee(s): Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee Policy and Resources Committee	Dated: 28 February 2024 18 March 2024
Subject: Draft High-Level Business Plan 2024/25 – Corporate Communications and External Affairs	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11 and 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	TBC
What is the source of Funding?	TBC
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	TBC
Report of: Emily Tofield, Executive Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs	C&CASC – For Discussion P&R - For Decision
Report author: Emily Tofield, Executive Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs	

Summary

This report presents the high-level business plan for Corporate Communications and External Affairs Department for 2024-2025.

The function is part of the Town Clerk’s Department.

Recommendation

Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee are invited to:

- Review and comment on the high-level Business Plan.

Members of the Policy and Resources Committee are invited to:

- Approve the high-level Business Plan.

Main Report

Background

1. As part of the new framework for corporate and business planning, departments were asked to produce standardised high-level, two-side business plans for the first time in 2017 for the 2018/19 year. Members generally welcomed these high-level plans for being brief, concise, focused and consistent statements of the key ambitions and objectives for every department.

2. For 2024/2025, the high-level business plans have been further evolved to add more narrative and improve readability. This plan differs significantly from the 2023/2024 submission. It reflects the progress that has been made since June 2023 in the ongoing transformation of the function, provision and strategic ambition for Corporate Communications and External Affairs at the City Corporation. The division has worked closely with the Corporate Strategy and Performance Team (CSPT) on the development of the new Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and will continue to ensure the Business Plan supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan's outcomes, when agreed. This document does not capture the granularity of work but gives the overall picture of activity, customer feedback, trends where applicable and direction of travel.

Draft final high-level Business Plan for 2024/2025

3. This report presents, at Appendix 1, the consolidated draft high-level business plan for 2024/2025 for Corporate Communications and External Affairs.
4. This is the first time the high-level business plan has been presented to the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee and represents the ambitious programme of transformation already underway.
5. Corporate Communications and External Affairs is part of the Town Clerk's Department. Due to the recent reforming of a Town Clerk's Department, the Executive Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs, Deputy Town Clerk and the Chief Strategy Officer are presenting separate 2024-25 high level Business Plans to the committees they report into, but will in future years work together to create a unified departmental high-level Business Plan.
6. The high-level Plan has been developed in consultation with senior officers and teams which make up the division and very much reflects the future direction of travel and ambition within the function. A transformation programme is underway within the division. Extensive engagement has also been carried out across the City Corporation to inform this Plan and to gather the evidence to evaluate the capability of existing core disciplines across the City Corporation. This is supporting the development of evidence-based recommendations for further improvements to ensure the organisation has a fit for purpose, enabled, central, and strategic communications and corporate (external) affairs function, which can become one of the main levers the City Corporation can use to deliver the new Corporate Plan and People Strategy, as well as increasing the skills and professionalism of the teams.
7. The Business Plan describes the core workstreams required to support the current transformation of the Corporate Communications and External Affairs function.
8. A new Chief Officer (Executive Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs) joined the City Corporation in June 2023 and launched a cross-divisional transformation and engagement programme.

9. Corporate Communications and External Affairs works across the entirety of the City of London Corporation and is responsible for providing comprehensive communications and external affairs expertise and resource to support the delivery of the overarching external and internal objectives of the City Corporation.
10. The division's core purpose is to use the power of first-class strategic communications and external engagement to help deliver the ambitious goals of the City of London Corporation for all the diverse communities it serves on a local, London, national and global scale. Innovative and audience focussed communications are part of what could make the City Corporation the best place to work in the world and the engine room of UK prosperity. Responsibility for the City Belonging Project and the City Corporation's Sport Strategy also fall within this division. The main workstreams for 2024-25 are:
 - a) Communications and External Affairs Strategy – delivery of a comprehensive strategy to support the City Corporation in its delivery of the Corporate Plan and key priorities (the first in around ten years).
 - b) Linked to the above, Transformation Programme – to deliver appropriate skilled and resourced function to ensure the delivery of professional, comprehensive corporate communications and external affairs.
 - c) City of London 2025 Election Engagement Campaign – to drive an increase in voter registration, candidates and participation.
 - d) General Election Political Engagement – continue to strengthen relationships across the political system and influence relevant policy areas.
 - e) Review of core strategic functions where the current expertise and resource are at a particularly low level of maturity – comprehensive expert reviews commissioned to review the City Corporation's digital communications and content, stakeholder engagement and management and brand.
 - f) Build in and strengthen insight and evaluation – improve systems and capability for monitoring the impact of activity to enable the delivery audience and insight-led communications and engagement.
 - g) Culture change communications – deliver comprehensive communications and engagement to support the delivery of the vision work and the new People Strategy (when agreed through the committee process).
 - h) Sport Strategy – deliver the first phase of the 2023-26 Sport Strategy.
11. The key milestones for each workstream are on page 3 of the attached Business Plan.

Departmental Operational Property Assets Utilisation Assessment

12. The function represents a current headcount of 34 FTE, all based in the Guildhall complex. The Corporate Communications and External Affairs team occupies a section of the West Wing and has an allocation of approximately 24 desks. Occupancy was monitored over a week and there was an average weekly occupancy of 57%, with occupancy higher midweek. The assessment identified that assets were fully utilised and this will be kept under review.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. The Corporate Communications and External Affairs Division sits at the heart of the organisation but delivers for the whole City Corporation. The communications and engagement strategy will be developed following intensive engagement with members and officers and will align with the Corporate Plan. The strategy will support the delivery of strategic, integrated communications and engagement.

Financial and resourcing implications

14. The function represented by this report within the Town Clerk's Department currently has a total budget of £2.7M and is benefitting from Transformation funding of £0.5m to support the programme of work required to deliver some of the key workstreams. There will need to be a review of the current budget and headcount to ensure the function can deliver its wide-ranging remit.

Public sector equality duty

15. The function is fully committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and is committed to championing accessible and inclusive communications, engagement, images and language. The function will also develop its own EDI plan during 2024/25.

Conclusion

16. This report presents the high-level Business Plan for 2024/25 for Corporate Communications and External Affairs.
- Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee are receiving the high-level Business Plan for comment and information.
 - Members of the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to approve the attached business plan.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Final high-level Business Plan 2024/25

Emily Tofield

Executive Director of Corporate Communications and External Affairs