

Publications and Communications Review

Equality Impact Assessment and Analysis

September 2013 (v 0.3)

Introduction

During the 2013/14 budget setting arrangements, the council approved a £100K efficiency target from April 2014 by carrying out a council wide review of publications.

A review of publications will cover key areas as follows:-

- critically review the need to publish;
- evaluate the appropriateness of moving council publications to an electronic format.

Communications has an essential role in supporting the organisation achieve its objectives. We are committed to helping staff, communities and partners shape and benefit from change. During the next couple of years communications will concentrate on encouraging growth and investment, driving digital by default, and helping people understand, visualise and accept change – inspiring them to take an active part in a more locally diverse future. We will do this whilst becoming more efficient and targeted in our work – to ensure that we deliver best value, cost savings, customer improvements and develop digital solutions that contribute to the reshaping of services.

In 2010 and early 2011, the council undertook a review of its communications, PR and marketing functions. The purpose of the review was to deliver efficiency savings and also to provide an opportunity to embed a more strategic structure and approach. As a result of the review, a new centralised communications function was established – bringing together media, digital, internal communications, design and marketing specialists.

2013 will see a second review of the communications function, as the organisation strives to ensure that all support services within the council are as lean as possible. The drive of digital by default will require a bolstering of digital resource within the team and a reshaping of other disciplines in response. As part of our 2013 budget consultation, 68% of people who responded agreed that making more services available on line was a good option for cost savings – leading to a fundamental reshaping of the structure and purpose of the communications function.

As outlined in the council's Communications Strategy, the focus and purpose of the communications team will in future provide much more than direct communication services. The team will become an important element in service delivery change and redesign by helping to provide digital solutions as a foundation for change – allowing communities greater ability to self-serve and self-care and to foster service delivery transformation change within the organisation.

This review will also have a focus on the structure and shape of the communications team to successfully support the delivery the council's Communication Strategy.

Identification and Analysis of Equalities Issues and Impacts

The key issue to be examined in respect of equalities is that of evaluating the appropriateness of moving council publications to an electronic format. This is because not all people will have access to publications produced in an electronic format for a variety of reasons. These will include:-

- No/limited access to the internet
- No/limited access to a computer
- No/limited knowledge of how to use a computer and/or the internet
- Digital formats not being appropriate to individual access needs.

A range of research has been conducted both nationally and within South Gloucestershire which examines issues surrounding access to and use of digital technology. Key findings are shown below.

National Research

Office for National Statistics (ONS) “Labour Force Survey - internet access quarterly update”, February 2013 findings show trend data highlighting some key characteristics of populations and internet use rates:

- Over the last year, there has been a 9.5% decrease in the proportion of adults who have *never* used the internet
- 15% of the adult population had never used the internet
- 85% of the adult population had used the internet
- Almost all adults aged 16 to 24 (99%) had used the internet
- Only 31% of adults aged 75 years and over had ever used the internet
- 44% of the 15% who had never used the internet were aged 75 years and over
- Just 1% of internet users aged 16 to 24 had last used the internet more than three months ago, in contrast 16% of internet users aged 75 and over last used it more than three months ago
- 51% of the 15% who had never used the internet were disabled adults
- Individuals with a disability are three times more likely to never have used the internet than individuals with no disability
- Internet use has almost reached full coverage for those earning in excess of £500 a week
- Of those adults in employment whose gross weekly pay was less than £200 a week, 6% had never used the internet

National research provides information surrounding the sorts of indicators that have an influence on what types of people are most likely to be digitally active or excluded:

- those aged over 65 years – exclusion increases with age (exclusion among those aged over 75 is 79%) – (source: *Digital Inclusion, University of Southampton, December '09*)
- those with no education
- Disabled People
- the economically inactive
- people who live alone
- web attitude
- rurality and distance from public services
- there is a correlation between digital exclusion and social exclusion/deprivation, and those who are digitally excluded are at risk of deepening exclusion

The National Audit Office's report *Digital Britain 2: Putting users at the heart of government's digital services*, 28 March 2013, is about the government's strategy for moving public services to 'digital by default' (see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-digital-strategy-moves-whitehall-closer-to-being-digital-by-default>). It reports the following:

- The Government Digital Service is working to make services 'digital by default'. Digital by default is defined as "digital services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so while those who can't are not excluded". However, the strategy also highlights the savings that can come from switching to digital channels.
- The government has made more ambitious plans over the last year, for making public services digital. It is 13 years since the government first announced that it would move public information and transaction services online; a move it initially intended to complete by 2005. Since we last reported in December 2011, the government's interest has broadened from consolidation of government websites to the more fundamental need to redesign public services with users at the heart. In July 2012, the *Civil Service Reform Plan* committed the government to becoming digital wherever possible. In November 2012, the *Government Digital Strategy* was published, which includes ways to help those who are not online to engage with government online.
- The *Government Digital Strategy* is based on sound evidence that many people and small- and medium-sized businesses can access and have the skills to use online public services. From our surveys we found that 83 per cent of people use the internet. Whether people live in a rural or urban area appears to make little difference to their internet use. Age, socio-economic group and disability do affect internet use. Over 90 per cent of those we surveyed who were online were experienced internet users who felt confident about completing online tasks without help. However, 7 per cent of those online lack confidence and may need help to use the internet.
- The Government Digital Service has set out plans on how it will support people who are offline to use online public services. Those we surveyed expressed some concerns about the impact of putting more public services online on the elderly, and those without skills or access to the internet. The government is planning to develop assisted digital support for 23 exemplar digital services by 2014-15, and to put in place common models of assisted digital support and shared procurement routes for assisted digital services. Of those people we surveyed, 17 per cent do not use the internet and of these 72 per cent do not intend to go online in the coming year. Most of those offline have low confidence in using a computer and know little about the internet. Based on these numbers, departments need to plan for around four million people in England who may need help in using online channels. However, of those people who are offline, 48 per cent already receive help from someone else, such as friends, family and work colleagues, to use the internet.

Local Research

The research report **“Understanding digital exclusion in South Gloucestershire: Data summary for South Gloucestershire digital inclusion strategy, April 2013”** makes the following findings:

“...we can assume at a district level, there are key groups that will need to be treated as more likely to be digitally excluded than other residents, and there are concentrations of these types of populations located throughout South Gloucestershire”.

Digitally included / active traits in South Gloucestershire – the LSOAs with the top 10% online response rates tend to have:

- People aged under 65 years, particularly those aged between 16 to 44 years
- People who are in employment
- Populations where there are more people with higher level qualifications
- more people in employment
- a higher percentage of the population whose main language is not English
- a lower proportion of people claiming key out-of-work benefits

Digitally excluded / inactive traits in South Gloucestershire – based on the data analysed, the bottom 10% of online response rates do not show such clear traits as the highest 10%. These LSOAs tend to have:

- People aged over 65 years, particularly those aged over 75 years
- People who have classed themselves as having a limiting illness
- Populations where there are more people with no qualifications
- People who are out of work or who are claiming out-of-work-benefits, particularly those who live in rural areas and are unable to access public provision of internet such as via libraries

The Viewpoint survey conducted in 2012 received results which appear to confirm the findings of the council’s research report of April 2013. The table below displays the Viewpoint results which show:

- People from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Background (BAME) are more likely to have never used the internet.
- Disabled People are more likely to have never used the internet.
- People over the age of 65 are more likely to have never used the internet.

Table to show responses to the Viewpoint question “How often do you use the internet?”

| Response | TOTAL | GENDER | | ETHNICITY | | DISABILITY | | AGE | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| | All | Male | Female | White | Non-White | Disabled | Non disabled | 18 to 24 | 25 to 34 | 35 to 44 | 45 to 64 | 65+ |
| Daily | 66% | 68% | 65% | 66% | 44% | 44% | 71% | 74% | 88% | 81% | 61% | 29% |
| A few times a week | 15% | 13% | 17% | 15% | 17% | 17% | 15% | 26% | 9% | 14% | 17% | 17% |
| Weekly | 3% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 5% | 4% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 6% | 2% |
| Fortnightly | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 3% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 2% |
| Monthly | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 1% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 3% | 3% |
| Less often | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 3% | 5% |
| Never | 10% | 10% | 10% | 10% | 24% | 26% | 7% | 0% | 2% | 1% | 8% | 41% |
| Don't know | *% | *% | *% | *% | 1% | 0% | *% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | *% |
| Not provided | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 2% |

Other Viewpoint survey findings in 2012 show that:-

- 38% of panel members who responded agree that documents should only be printed on request as a way of saving money.
- 52% of those aged 25-35 and 46% of those aged 35-45 felt that this was important.

Research conducted in 2012/13 by the Strategic Communications team found that:

- Demographic data from the council's facebook page illustrates that whilst our primary audience on facebook is currently 25 to 44 year old Female, both older and younger users are increasingly engaging with our page.
- In January 2013, six out of 10 UK residents owned a smartphone. 32% of adults access the internet by smartphone every day. South Gloucestershire Council research shows that current access to our website is broken down as follows: smartphone - 13%, tablet - 17%, desktop - 70%. This means that 30% of access to our website is mobile. The mobile proportion is growing quickly and we expect the mobile usage to rise to about 80% within a year or two. Smartphones are used across all social and economic groups and are increasingly viewed as essential items in terms of household spending.

In addition, the Strategic Communications team has successfully delivered the following work during 2012/13:

- The public website has been redesigned to allow for improved accessibility on mobile devices. Using responsive design, the pages now automatically render themselves in a mobile friendly format when viewed on smartphones and smaller screen devices.
- The team worked closely with the library service, carer groups, community learning, customer services and our partners to bring together the work already being done in South Gloucestershire around assisted digital, services and facilities available including training.
- Working together with colleagues in Children, Adults and Health department and the Learning Difficulties Partnership Board (LDPB), a project is underway to develop a section of our public website (portal) to provide key service information in easy-read format for persons with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
- All staff within the team have undergone easy-read training and will work with clients to improve the amount of service information available in easy-read format.
- Produced various documents in easy read including LDPB annual report, Olympic torch relay fact sheet, Choices 4 U annual report, council tax reduction scheme, youth services and housing priorities consultations.
- Produced the council tax booklet as a web page so that they work with read aloud technology.
- Worked on communications and promotion of the following via a combination of press releases, flyers, videos, web pages and social media:-
 - Choices 4 U service for adults with learning difficulties enabling users to take part in sport, fitness classes and social activities
 - Walk A Day festival for older people with mobility issues
 - Family Wildwalk as part of Wild4life – encouraging people with disabilities to join in.
 - 2013 Union cup – Cllr Ian Boulton kicked off the match with members of Bristol's gay and inclusive rugby club
 - Celestine Home – Launch of the home adaptation centre in Yate which was opened by Karen Butler, Paralympian
 - Accessibility of transport – promoting raised kerbs, low floor buses and RNIB key fobs for real time displays
 - Shopmobility service, international women's day, come and try event, disability equalities network
 - Hand bike – the St Paul's adventure playground based scheme
 - Celebrating Carers April 2013 – accessible event attended for carers and the people they care for (fully accessible venue/event, transport etc.)
 - On-going carers communications indirectly supporting service users with disabilities
 - On-going Safeguarding Adults Board work – including adult abuse posters and web pages
 - Specialist mental health carers' support and Reading Well books on prescription

In terms of the protected characteristics set out within The Equality Act 2010, it is clear that there is potential for the following groups to proportionately experience less opportunity to access publications should they be produced in a digital format only:

- People aged over 65 years, particularly those aged over 75 years
- Disabled People
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds

It is also important to consider:

- People with lower levels of educational attainment
- People who are out of work or who are claiming out-of work-benefits, particularly those who live in rural areas and are unable to access public provision of internet such as via libraries

Mitigating Actions

Having identified potential impacts above, the following actions are planned and are aimed at reducing and eliminating negative impact:

We will:

- Develop an assisted digital programme to assist those who are offline which can be delivered through our one stop shops, libraries and other partners (and potentially FE colleges, charities, citizens advice centres etc.). This would provide help for people to find and self-serve the information they need - or indeed to undertake the transaction they need - online. national research has shown that, of those people who are offline, 48 per cent already receive help from someone else, such as friends, family and work colleagues, to use the internet.
- Produce a list of council publications and conduct an exercise to assess publications which have a particular interest for Older People, Disabled People and BAME people. As a result of this, we will liaise with The South Gloucestershire Equalities Forum to ascertain any publications and formats that should be provided and publicised to these groups.
- Liaise with the council's internal corporate management team for equalities (EDAT) to keep the group abreast of developments and ensure their dissemination of the requirements on all teams across the council to examine their communications activities and intended recipients when considering their publications activities.
- Revisit our access statement to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and is consistent with what we know about the South Gloucestershire population via the latest census information.
- Internally publicise the Council's Equality & Diversity Communications Toolkit which provides comprehensive guidance for staff on communicating with diverse groups.
- As part of the digital inclusion agenda, communications and marketing campaigns will be delivered to ensure that residents and businesses are aware of the benefits of getting online, understand where to get help and support and can access information on what facilities and services are available. We aim to fully engage voluntary agencies, charities and local businesses in this work to ensure a diverse audience reach.
- Publish the first communities announcement video animation on social media channels and website.
- Further video animation work is planned including its use in sign language videos.
- Test the new easy-read portal with the Learning Difficulties Partnership Board (LDPB) and incorporate any feedback before launching the portal. The portal will then continue to be developed as more content is available in easy-read, audio and video format
- Produce a video to promote employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties .
- Provide digital support as part of Low Vision campaign including audio to communicate with blind and sight impaired residents (to tie in with national eye care week).
- Provide digital and communications support to engage, network and support people with mental health issues. Raising the profile of the 24 projects we've funded through the Everybody's Business Grant Scheme.

Employment Impact

In terms of staff impacted by this review the following table provides information in respect of protected characteristic groups.

Table to show the percentage of those impacted declaring protected characteristics.

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Female | 55% |
| Male | 45% |
| | |
| Disabled | 0% |
| Not Disabled | 85% |
| Unknown | 15% |
| | |
| White British | 90% |
| BME | 0% |
| Unknown | 10% |
| | |
| Under 25 | 0% |
| 25 – 44 | 55% |
| 45 – 64 | 45% |
| 65+ | 0% |

The data available has been analysed by all protected characteristic information available in order to gauge potential impact. This data is provided through HR returns held on staff; and it is recognised that the data relies on disclosure by staff.

As a result of the data, there is no adverse impact identified in respect of any particular protected characteristic group. Staff requiring particular support have been identified and such support is in place in line with the Workforce Change Procedure which itself has undergone robust EqIAA.

EqIAA Outcome

A potential for negative impact in respect of Older People Disabled People and minority ethnic people has been identified. However, a wide range of mitigating actions have also been identified. These actions will now be delivered and their impact reviewed. Review information will inform a further EqIAA which will ascertain the success of meeting the communications needs of those identified.