

<b>NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY</b>
<b><u>REPORT TITLE</u></b>
NLWA Communications Capacity

<b><u>JOINT REPORT OF</u></b>	
Clerk to the North London Waste Authority and Interim Managing Director	
<b><u>FOR SUBMISSION TO</u></b>	<b><u>DATE</u></b>
North London Waste Authority	25th September 2009

<b><u>SUMMARY OF REPORT</u></b>
NLWA Advisers consider that within the current arrangements for providing support, there is insufficient communications capacity to deliver on NLWA objectives.
The report sets out recommendations to address this capacity shortfall.
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<b><u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u></b>
The NLWA is recommended to:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To approve the recruitment of a part time senior communications officer as set out in paragraphs 5.2 – 6.2 delegating to the Clerk in consultation with the Managing Director authority to set the exact level of remuneration and other employment terms and conditions.</li> <li>2. To note the budget implications at paragraph 6.2 and 8.1.</li> </ol>

<b><u>SIGNED BY</u></b>	
	
Moira Gibb Clerk to the NLWA	Mike Stroud Interim Managing Director

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Effective communications is an important part of the day to day activity of the Authority as it deals with the waste from its seven constituent boroughs and works with these boroughs on a range of initiatives, such as the 'Love Food Hate Waste' Campaign. The NLWA's comprehensive Communications Strategy, which was included in the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the major procurements, aims to build and manage the Authority's reputation and, amongst other things, move the Authority from a reactive approach to communications to a more strategic proactive approach. The strategy, last considered by Authority members on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008, assumes that there will be consistent themes and messages in NLWA communications, and that communication will be open and two-way.
- 1.2 The current major procurements have significantly extended the pressure for a wide range of high quality communications and public relations activities, and a specific procurement communications plan has been developed to manage this. This will continue to be an essential element of a successful procurement programme up to and beyond the introduction of the new arrangements in 2014.
- 1.3 In May the Authority considered DEFRA/WIDP's review of the OBC. The review identified four key resources issues. In relation to communications, it was specifically noted that:

“we face a significant communications challenge relating to potential site acquisition, our desire to be open with information where possible, and to be proactive in communicating visions for sites and addressing any related concerns.”
- 1.4 The report went on to note that in dealing with this, officers were seeking to make best use of Borough communication capacity where that is available, and where the communication interests of the NLWA and the Borough are aligned. However, the report acknowledged that a longer term solution needed to be found to improve communications capacity.
- 1.5 Separately, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April the Authority considered an update on the work delivered by Bell Pottinger, who had been engaged to provide support on public affairs and lobbying. The report noted that Bell Pottinger had offered support during a period of intense activity, and may have created some opportunities that the NLWA may not have otherwise been able to pursue. However, officers reported that in their opinion, the engagement of Bell Pottinger had been of limited added value, and that that lobbying work had continued to rely strongly on internal NLWA capacity to identify key issues and deliver on them.

- 1.6 It was agreed not to extend the relationship with Bell Pottinger, but it was recognised that a substantial and challenging communications agenda remained in respect of external stakeholder engagement, engaging with members in NLWA Boroughs who do not sit on the Authority, and managing communications around sites. It was agreed that consideration needed to be given to how the public relations agenda for the NLWA could be delivered cost-effectively, and whether internal communications resources could deliver this, most likely in conjunction with some sort of call-off capacity.

## **2. Current communications capacity**

- 2.1 Dedicated NLWA communications capacity is provided through the post of Media and Marketing Officer. This is a four-day a week appointment. The postholder was recruited to provide hands-on communication support, and is doing this very successfully with her communications peers in the seven boroughs. The current service includes press management and monitoring, as well as drafting information materials. She has also organised the successful NLWA presence at the recent Chartered Institute of Waste Management Futuresource international waste conference and is overseeing communications around the Love Food Hate Waste campaign.
- 2.2 At Adviser level, communications support is provided on an ad hoc basis from the Head of Communications and senior press officer at London Borough of Camden, who also provide professional management to the Media and Marketing Officer.

## **3. Communications challenges**

- 3.1 The reports referred to in section 1 set out some of the strategic communications challenges that the NLWA will be facing in the short to medium term. In summary these are:
- The complexity of communication surrounding land use planning and the inevitable consequential debates around technology: This will be intense proactive work, including outreach to residents and interest groups, but also working with planning advisers, officers and Members in borough authorities, and across all tiers of government. For example, there are over 400 local authority Members in the 7 boroughs and only 14 directly involved with the procurements.
  - Challenges around the interface between the management and development of the current service and shaping the procurement of new long-term facilities, and the extent to which implications need to be fully understood
  - Public affairs work with MPs and other stakeholders, including the London Assembly, with a focus on raising awareness of the OBC and main procurement activity
  - Risk management around communications

- 3.2 There is also a substantial amount of communications work associated with the Authority's waste prevention work, support of community recycling organisations and the public face of the day-to-day business of the Authority.

#### **4. Managing the challenges**

- 4.1 Until this point, these challenges have been absorbed in a number of ways. The engagement of Bell Pottinger was an attempt to deal with some of the issues, but as already described, did not effectively reduce the need for NLWA officer capacity. As previously noted, some work has been handled in conjunction with boroughs. The Director of Procurement and Head of Waste Strategy and Contracts are both heavily involved in work relating to communications. Moving forward, this seems increasingly unsustainable as the demands will only increase.

#### **5. Proposals to address the challenges**

- 5.1 Officers have considered options for addressing the shortfall in communications capacity. One option considered has been purchasing communications and public affairs support externally. However, the Bell Pottinger exercise has demonstrated the difficulties in specifying the exact requirements, and in servicing the requirement for support back from the NLWA. Any such arrangement would need client expertise in the NLWA to ensure maximum value is delivered, which does not exist in the current arrangement.
- 5.2 It is therefore recommended that a part-time communications manager post is created for the NLWA. This post would oversee the full range of communications activities for the authority, including public relations, media, marketing, web communications, internal communication and the public affairs brief. The expectation is that this portfolio could be achieved in a 2.5/3 day working week.
- 5.3 It is proposed that any such post would report direct to the Managing Director, and be based at the NLWA offices in Tottenham Hale. There would be an expectation that the postholder would need to understand the day to day work of the Authority and the progress of projects, such as the procurement exercises. They would need to be a senior enough appointment to be able to operate confidently and with gravitas across the full range of stakeholders outlined in this report, and would be part of the senior management team of the Authority.
- 5.4 In terms of working relationships, the postholder would be line managed, and have objectives set, by the Managing Director, but would receive professional support and guidance from the Head of Communications at Camden. The postholder would assume line management responsibility for the Media and Marketing Officer.

**6. Appointment and remuneration**

- 6.1 Any appointment would, at this stage, be as an employee of the London Borough of Camden although this arrangement could be subject to further review in the future if consideration is given to whether the NLWA should become the employing authority in its own right. In any event, any changes would be subject to consultation with existing employees. It is proposed to make any appointment for a period of 12 months in the first instance to provide the opportunity to review the success of this at the end of the period.
- 6.2 The remuneration, terms and conditions of employment would be set by the Clerk and Managing Director on the basis of professional HR advice, looking at comparable roles in the communications field. It is likely that salary will be at a level around £45,000 - £50,000 per annum, on a pro-rata basis. With an allowance for employers' overheads, the post is estimated to cost in the region of £9,375 in 2009/10 and £28,125 in 2010/11 based upon a three-day week. Allowing also for the costs of recruitment and day-to-day operational costs this could add a further £4,000 in 2009/10 and £5,600 in 2010/11.

**7. Comments of the Legal Adviser**

- 7.1 These have been incorporated within the report.

**8. Comments of the Financial Adviser**

- 8.1 The comments of the Financial Adviser have been included in the body of this report but would add that the proposed cost of up to £13,375 in 2009/10 can be contained within the 2009/10 Governance and Other Support budget. The cost in 2010/11 is estimated to be in the region of £33,725 and if approved will be incorporated into the 2010/11 budget.