

BRANDING

Agenda Item: 6b

Summary: This paper outlines the potential options for re-branding the new councils and raises awareness of the key issues involved. It also looks at areas where cost savings could be made through increased collaborative working across all council clusters. This paper has been considered by the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) and the Policy Development Panels (PDPs), and their comments have been incorporated.

Action: To consider the issues raised and endorse the preferred approach.

1. WHAT IS IN A BRAND?

- 1.1 Branding is important in communicating an organisation's vision and values and establishing/maintaining reputation. The re-branding for the new councils represents the opportunity to improve satisfaction, build relationships and trust with local people and help members of the community understand what their rates pay for. A successful brand strategy will impact on all aspects of business operation and performance.
- 1.2 The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) recommends that branding is more than just a logo and should be linked to services in the new council structure. It offers an opportunity for the council to receive the credit and recognition it deserves for service delivery.
- 1.3 IDeA also recommends that councils should focus on a few priorities and simple, key messages to ensure that the corporate identity is used

consistently and correctly across the organisation; and avoid sub-brands wherever possible.

2. BACKGROUND TO BRANDING SUB-GROUP

- 2.1** Branding is becoming an increasingly important issue to Transition Committees with some clusters already commencing work on re-branding.
- 2.2** It should be noted that PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), in the economic appraisal for local government service delivery, has identified costs for re-branding on their experience for working with councils in Great Britain that have undergone the process of moving to single councils. Costs have been identified as £4.4 million which have been factored in to all of their options which entail some level of change.
- 2.3** Funding for the entire reform programme including branding costs is subject to negotiations between the Finance Minister and the DOE Minister. The Finance Minister has already stated that the current financial climate and budgetary constraints on the Executive are likely to have an impact on the outcome of these discussions.
- 2.4** It has been recognised by the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) that there could be potential cost savings through collaboration across council clusters on branding. In light of this the Communications Group was commissioned to produce a paper to assist in establishing a consistent way forward.
- 2.5** A Branding Sub-group was established from volunteers from the Communications Group. This Sub-Group met on 2 December with representatives from: Antrim/Newtownabbey; Armagh; Banbridge and Craigavon; Department of the Environment (DOE); and Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).

- 2.6 The Group discussed various approaches to branding and focussed on three possible options, outlining the positives and negatives associated with each as below:

3. RE-BRANDING OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1 – Do everything by Day 1, Local Government Reform Implementation Date

Positives

- Early commencement of building relationships with the community the council serves by providing visual information on area identification such as the facilities within the new boundaries. Clarity on roles and responsibilities from Day 1 of the new council would provide a greater opportunity to educate the public on what services the new councils provide by using the brand with the promotion and publishing of information.
- As there would be a clear visual identity people would find it easier to relate to the changes in council structure. The process would also feel more organised which would encourage more confidence.
- Councils could concentrate on the change process by using the already agreed brand to promote any future changes to the delivery of services in their area.

Negatives

- The timescale is extremely short and it would be unrealistic considering the volume of work alongside other ongoing reform issues. Statutory Transition Committees already have a challenging work programme.
- There are other communications issues that need addressed such as communicating and supporting staff on the changes.
- Funding and resources are still in the negotiation stages.

- There is a possible risk that the Statutory Transition Committee could decide on a name which is then changed by the new council. This would result in a costly exercise with ratepayers paying twice for the re-branding.
- There could be difficulty getting agreement on the naming and branding by Day 1 as well as the logistics of replacing all the identified signage.
- Wastage – if all branding is being changed by Day 1 then it cannot be phased in line with fleet renewal and batch production. This would mean a lot of wastage of the old material which would prove more costly than phasing out supplies of the old material.

3.2 Option 2: Do nothing until after Local Government Reform Implementation date – commence research

Positives

- Time/money could be concentrated on core communication issues during the change process.
- The new council would be making the decision – there would be no risk of changing the name/branding.

Negatives

- There would be less ownership and visual impact for people to identify with the new council – it would be more difficult to help people see that there has been a change.
- The opportunity would be lost on Day 1 to launch the vision and future design for the new council.
- There could be legal implications for not having the correct legal name or signage particularly for example on Payroll cheques, payslips, HR paperwork or in areas where personal liability may be an issue.

- There may be implications on the receipt of funding and timeframe for expenditure if other clusters are taking different decisions on moving forward.

3.3 Option 3 – Phased approach over 12 month period

Re-brand assets which have been identified through a Branding Audit, as core that both staff and the citizen engage with from Day 1 such as: uniforms for staff; main office buildings; legal documents; and websites. Branding some promotional items such as mobile pop up stands would mean that the new identity would be present at key events and photo opportunities.

Positives

- A phased approach commencing prior to implementation date would help with planning costs and budgets.
- More cost effective and realistic in terms of the logistics of getting vehicles and machinery off road to re-spray. It would also mean that the re-branded fleet could be rolled out in line with fleet renewal and batch production.
- As there is already a challenging workload this would free up more time to dedicate to core communications issues.
- There would be visual representation of the merger but at minimum cost so that staff and communities could still identify with the new council.
- It would be a less risky and more manageable approach cost-wise.
- Legal requirements would be fulfilled in terms of any identified liability issues.
- Support and knowledge gained from other organisations that have undergone a major change process such as: Health Trusts; NI Water; and other councils in England and Scotland points to a phased approach.

Negatives

- This approach would lose some impact as everything would not be re-branded by Day 1.
- This could create confusion for people as there would be a mix of old and new branding for some time.
- Whilst diminished, a risk remains that the new council could change the branding which could still pass on some costs to the ratepayer.

4. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The Statutory Transition Committee will have the legal power to agree the name of their new council. However, consideration needs to be taken that this could be overturned during the new council coming into operation which could have cost implications. This raises the question if decisions on branding were taken back to full council would they be less likely to be overturned by the new council?
- If a procurement process is required with external organisations invited to tender this can take some time and finance arrangements are still in the negotiation stages.
- It is difficult to ascertain specific costs as this will vary across council clusters depending on factors such as size, numbers in fleet etc. A branding audit would help to ascertain what will need re-branded in each cluster in order to get an idea of scale and costs but this will be time consuming. This will also require the co operation of managers and staff in the clusters who would have to assist with documenting where logos currently reside (both electronic and hard copy.)
- A clear outline of the overall governance structure/project management structure, for the communications work would be

helpful. For example, who is responsible for the review, approval and signing off, of the communications materials from the cluster. This should help to avoid costly delays for design time for new branding.

- Agreeing a name to fit with deadlines for re-branding and selecting a name that the new council will be content with could be difficult in the timescale.
- Acknowledging and progressing the volume of work involved in the overall change programme plus the re-branding whilst maintaining business as usual is a concern.
- Communication planning should include staff/supplier awareness in relation to the use of new documentation and timeframe for the disposal of old documentation and materials – clear guidance will be needed in terms of what “old” collateral can be used beyond Day 1. This will also assist in “running down” supplies of old stock so that it is phased out as soon as possible. This should also relate to all brand applications including signage, livery etc.
- Key priorities for Day 1 and the essentials need to be identified through the recommended Branding Audit – such as any legal documents; financial documents; licences; essentially what the council needs to function as a legal and operational business. Clusters should consider any legal activities for example ensuring contracts with external suppliers include appropriate clauses for council name changes. Some councils have begun their branding audits and have offered to share their work with others which should assist with producing an audit template for guidance.
- Consideration should be given as to what arrangements are in place for any materials, for example annual reports developed just prior to May 2011.

- Thought should also be given to any significant events on council calendars in May 2011 which would require ordering promotional material for example, festivals.

5. WHERE COULD COST SAVINGS BE MADE?

Increased collaboration across council clusters could make savings in terms of re-branding and communications - there are potential options below:

- Through an individual Branding Audit, agree across all clusters the shared priorities for re-branding for Day 1 which could provide opportunities for savings and economies of scale.
- Put in place arrangements for the procurement of external expertise, if required, meaning that clusters can avail of more competitive rates.
- Where possible make bulk orders on a more collective basis for stationery etc.
- Share the use of marketing/branding expertise across council clusters for the design of new material such as stationery and business cards based on agreed branding guidelines.
- One overall 'good practice branding guideline' could be developed and applied across all council clusters (incorporating cluster logos and symbols) which would provide overarching consistency yet maintain autonomy. If this could draw on in-house knowledge and expertise it would provide the opportunity to make further savings. Some cross cluster discussions on best practice approaches to developing brands would be helpful as a

starting point to see what internal expertise is available and to agree a common starting point.

- There could be arrangements put in place for co-ordinating disposal of existing material within or across council clusters in line with recycling requirements.
- Through carrying out branding audits, clusters could look collectively at signage levels to see if the current level of branding is consistent across clusters and if more or less branding is required.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- Option 3 - a phased approach is recommended as the most realistic and manageable way forward in terms of timescale and costs.
- Each cluster should complete a branding audit, as a basis for further work to assist with accurate cluster costs; establishing what needs to be re-branded as a Day 1 priority; and a timetable for the roll out of a re-branding programme during the 12 months.
- Further work to be carried out on what areas can be worked on collectively and where in-house experience can be utilised on a cross-cluster basis to maximise financial savings.

Joint Secretariat

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