

Barrow Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Thursday, 2 February 2023
PR, Communications & Social Media Services

Report from: Director of Resources

Report Author: Director of Resources

Wards: (All Wards);

1.0 Summary and Conclusions

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information and assurance regarding the Council's contracted service for PR, Communications & Social Media Services.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 **It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report and raise any questions.**

3.0 Background and Proposals

3.1 The PR, Communications & Social Media Services contract ("the Contract") was awarded to 32West following full tender exercise at the start of 2021. The Contract provides the Council with a positive and informative presence across various forms of consumed media.

3.2 The Contract provides access to a highly specialised team led by a dedicated Account Director who is an experienced career journalist. The Contract was tendered when the recovery from COVID-19 was unclear, and the future of local government in Cumbria was undecided.

3.3 The Contract started in June 2021 and ends in July 2023. The annual value of the contract is £85k and that covers all external and internal communications, press, marketing, promotion, branding, planning and support to Members and Officers.

3.4 The team are proactive and are linked into key services to plan the most effective campaigns and to ensure the timeliness of messages to the wider community.

- 3.5 The Council is also able to purchase additional days for new projects where there is an unplanned significant need for press or communications – an example of this is the insourcing of the Waste Service. Messaging is vital to reassure customers and be clear on any impacts or adjustments that will affect them. Additional days may only be requested by the Senior Management Team.
- 3.6 The Contract is managed by the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of People and Place.
- 3.7 The performance of the services purchased is very visible, with press releases reviewed by the Senior Management Team, the Leader of the Council, and the Council's Spokespersons. Performance is judged to be the quality of the communications and advice given to the Council. There is a regular review/reflection of service delivery by the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of People and Place; this contract will novate to Westmorland and Furness Council for the remaining months.
- 3.8 The contract may be terminated if there is a material breach of the agreed terms and may be triggered by either party to the Contract. If there were a breach this would be subject to investigation, discussion, and remediation prior to termination.
- 3.9 The Contract provides a very visible service as previously mentioned. The Council's overall media presence has grown significantly under the guidance and planning of 32West. This includes the Brilliant Barrow design and branding, and the ongoing promotion of the Town Deal programme.
- 3.10 There have been no issues with the operation of the Contract or the performance of the services. The Council has benefitted by having the 32West Account Director represent the Borough in the development of Westmorland and Furness Council's PR, communications, and social media solutions.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 The report is presented for noting.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The report is presented for noting.

6.0 Contribution to Council Plan Priorities

- 6.1 The report is intended to provide information and assurance of contractual arrangements which underpin the Council's aim of achieving value for money. The links to the Council Plan from the services within the Contract apply equally across People, Place and Prosperity.

7.0 Implications

7.1 Financial, Resources and Procurement

- 7.1.1 The Contract is funded from the Council's core revenue budget. Where there are new requirements such as funded programmes or ad hoc requirements such as the insourcing of the Waste Service, funding is added to the core budget and reported in line with the Financial Regulations.
- 7.1.2 The Contract will not be re-procured by Barrow Borough Council and Westmorland and Furness Council shall determine its requirements.
- 7.1.3 There is no internal communications officer.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications from the recommendation.

7.3 Local Government Reorganisation

- 7.3.1 The contract with 32West will novate to Westmorland and Furness Council.

7.4 Equality and Diversity

- 7.4.1 Have you completed an Equality Impact Analysis? No – this recommendation does not impact any individuals.

Risk

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
Contracts are not properly managed.	Financial loss. Reputational damage.	Contract monitoring and performance review.

Contact Officers

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