

ONESOURCE JOINT COMMITTEE

Subject heading:

**Branding and communications for
oneSource shared services**

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Financial summary:

N/A

SUMMARY

With changes to oneSource's strategic direction, the shared service is now seeking to focus less on generating external revenue and expansion, and more on delivering excellent service and supporting the partner councils' savings, transformation and modernisation agendas. There is therefore a desire to see the partnership become more embedded within the councils and reduce the perception of client-contractor split; hence plans have been put in place to address branding and staff communications.

This briefing paper sets out:

- What steps will be taken to reframe the oneSource brand internally so that staff are made to feel more a part of a shared services directorate within the councils and less a separate organisation.
- What steps will be taken to address the wider issue of staff engagement and help foster an affinity for the shared service and, consequently, the three boroughs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee is asked to note the contents of this briefing paper.

REPORT DETAIL

1. BRANDING

1.1. Background

With the Joint Committee providing clear direction for the shared service in terms of embedding oneSource services as individual professional services rather than a wholly separate organisation,

the management team has been working on an Improvement Plan that addresses the need to relook at branding.

1.2. Action Plan

An action plan detailing how this will be achieved has been developed and will be implemented over the coming months. This includes, for example, the usage of:

- email signatures;
- letter templates; and
- Induction guides;

Some channels, such as email addresses, will continue to be used as they are. Communications will gradually rolled out over the coming months notifying staff of the changes to protocols. Please see appendix 1 for the proposed first message to staff.

2. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

2.1. Background

To reflect the new priorities for oneSource, it has been identified that shared service staff need to be encouraged to align to all the partners' culture, priorities and values. In order to do so, a review of staff group feedback, briefings feedback and communications survey results was carried out to understand staff thoughts and opinions about working across multiple boroughs.

The evidence demonstrates that due to uncertainty and upheaval surrounding oneSource's continuation, direction and purpose, staff have moved away from aligning to the shared service (and to an extent the three boroughs) to only prioritising and having an affinity for their home borough. As shared service staff are expected to deliver services to the best of their ability to **all** councils, this disengagement must be turned around.

2.1.1. Communications methods

Prior to May 2018, staff were regularly communicated to via monthly staff newsletters, intranet messaging and regular staff briefings. Since then, a moratorium has been in place on corporate communications, with the exception of a couple of briefings in 2018 that provided an overview of the new strategic direction and email messages for specific developments (e.g. senior appointments).

2.2. Key findings

2.2.1. ONCE Network

- A staff committee (The ONCE Network), set up at the end of 2017 to encourage two way communications and engagement across services, has seen numbers fall by 90% and so has temporarily been on hold since December 2018. Reasons for non-attendance include:
 - Travel
 - Workloads
 - Non-belief in their voices being heard.
- Feedback gathered:
 - Staff want greater clarity on direction and better integration of services' communications
 - Concern at the lack of communications since May 2018
 - Personally feel their investment in the shared service has been wasted
 - Feeling unable to take on three different cultures, values and priorities

2.2.2. Staff communications survey

- Staff completed a communications survey in July 2016 prior to the corporate communications suspension and changes to the Shared Service's strategic direction.

- 56% of staff agreed with the statement “overall I am satisfied working for oneSource” compared with 72% of UK local government employees feeling the same way about their authority (shared service data not available).
- 52% felt well informed (prior to suspension and formation of ONCE committee)
- Many statements were neither agreed nor disagreed with, e.g. “I feel proud to work for oneSource” (30% neither agreeing nor disagreeing); highlighting considerable indifference.

2.2.3. Findings conclusion

The feedback highlights lack of clarity around, and communications of, direction and developments. Regular communications is key to building a satisfied and motivated workforce and establishing trust. The communications and engagement strategies outlined later in the report focus on encouraging two-way communications between management and staff, and between colleagues across services.

2.3. **Communications objectives**

The communication objectives set in 2013 are no longer relevant as their focus was to identify oneSource as separate organisation. Three new objectives are being proposed, each aligned to three key focus areas for internal communications:

- **Corporate Strategy:** Communicating organisational vision and values, and ensuring staff are aware of future business priorities.
- **Business Development:** Informing employees of organisational developments (successes / challenges) and industry news.
- **Employee Focus:** Announcing staff changes, promoting cultural diversity and encouraging uptake of developmental opportunities.

2.3.1. New objectives

Ref	Focus	Objective (to be achieved by August 2021)	Current score	Min Target
CO1	Corporate Strategy	Staff will understand the strategic direction of the shared service.	59%	TBD
CO2	Business Development	Staff will be aware of the developments within oneSource occurring across all service areas.	52%	TBD
CO3	Employee Focus	Staff will feel that communications has become more of a two way process and their opinions and thoughts are taken on board.	N/A	TBD

Objectives will be assessed via a staff survey that will present statements relating to the focus areas, carried out 2 years after implementation of strategies; please see appendix 2.

2.4. **Strategic options**

2.4.1. Reinstatement of internal communications

The suspension of communications has resulted in uneasiness and confusion amongst staff and regular internal communications has been shown to create a sense of community and trust within an organisation. It is therefore recommended that internal communications methods are re-employed, though modified to reflect the new objectives.

2.4.2. ONCE staff committee

Studies document that staff committees result in better staff engagement, a decrease in employee turnover, increase in service user satisfaction and improved service delivery. It is therefore

recommended that the staff committee is reinstated with members of OMT actively sitting on the committee to provide steer on the art of the possible. Tasks could include:

- Redeveloping and planning the communication of the Shared Services' vision and values
- Working with HR to develop strategies for talent management, succession planning and performance, rewards and recognition;
- Raising awareness of the direction, developments and issues and pressures within the partner councils and the Shared Service;

2.4.3. Removing barriers

Staff need to be engaged and able to communicate their ideas and suggestions with senior management and the rest of the organisation. Staff have voiced that supervisors and managers can be a "hindrance to voicing opinions, feeling empowered to do a job well and innovating". The Shared Service must find ways of removing non-physical barriers between staff on the ground and the management team. These could include:

- Asking for feedback from staff across disciplines in small intimate meetings and later communicating what is being done with the feedback;
- Inviting staff to senior leadership forums within the councils to provide updates, publicise achievements and innovations.

2.4.4. Spreading values through recruitment and HR

In combining the skills of HR and the Business Development team, a number of steps can be taken to support staff in aligning with the boroughs in addition to the shared service.

- De-emphasise "oneSource" as a pseudo-employer – use council branded job descriptions but include description of the Shared Service in adverts to highlight expectations of working across multiple boroughs;
- Have a small induction for Shared Service staff (in addition to council corporate induction) to provide overview of councils' hot topics, priorities and how the Shared Service is supporting this.

2.5. **Next steps**

July – August: create action plan to include:

- Review and refresh of the staff committee
- Creation of a new internal communications plan
- Options for encouraging exchanges of ideas with staff

August 2019 – August 2021: Implementation

August 2021 – Evaluation of objectives through staff survey

Legal implications and risks: None

Financial Implications and risks: None

HR Implications and risks: None

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1 – ED Message to staff regarding branding changes

Dear colleagues,

Shared Service Improvement Plan & Branding

I write to update you on the current position on the branding and “public image” of oneSource and to provide some guidance about the future direction in this area.

The current branding reflects the need in 2014 to establish the identity and vision of the new shared service with staff, members and the wider public sector. This was successfully achieved and we are now a mature stable shared service with a successful brand commercially and are well known in the local government sector. However, internally, it is recognised that some staff mistakenly perceive oneSource as a separate organisation from the partner Councils and we need to redress this perception and re-establish our position as a leading in-house shared service.

In line with this, the partner authorities have reaffirmed their commitment to oneSource and now want us to focus on the support to their services and transformation agendas and to ensure we are viewed as part of their corporate structure. We have been working with the oneSource Joint Committee (including the Mayor of Newham, the Leader of Havering and the Cabinet Member for Resources in Bexley) to reframe our branding to match this new mature ambition.

I have been working with the Directors to create an Improvement Plan, a part of which addresses the need to review our branding to ensure it reflects these priorities. An action plan detailing how we will achieve this has been developed and will be implemented over the forthcoming weeks.

What does this mean?

Most things will remain as they are but we will be refocussing some of the branding of communications and our internal image. We also want to keep changes simple to understand and implemented in a phased way to avoid wasted resources.

Please note this is just an introduction and full guidance will be issued to allow for a smooth changeover.

Internally

The main changes will come with how we communicate with our internal colleagues in the three partner councils.

- A key change will be to reduce the use of the oneSource name internally and instead identify ourselves by our professional capacity (e.g. Procurement or Property Services). Each Directorate needs to establish its new service titles for agreement by the oneSource Management Team to ensure consistency.
- We will still use the name oneSource where it makes sense to do so but refer to the services collectively as “The Shared Service”. Going forward we will identify ourselves with individual clients by our professional service, e.g. XXX from Legal Services.
- There will be changes to email signatures, letter templates and lanyards and you will be informed of these in due course. Some channels, such as email addresses, will continue to be used as they are. Communications will begin to trickle through notifying you of changes to protocols over the next month or so, so please be on the look out and spread the word to colleagues without computers.
- Though many branding channels are not in place at Bexley, we will still need to be mindful of how we refer to ourselves when communicating to our colleagues within each council.

External Work and Marketing

The Shared Service has successfully built up the oneSource brand externally over 5 years. Some services bring in a significant amount of income for the partner councils and others are building their client base, especially amongst other authorities. It is agreed that the oneSource brand should remain for external work and communications, e.g. press releases or in marketing materials.

However, as part of the partner Councils wish for the Shared Service to focus on supporting their services, we will be reducing the amount of marketing activity we undertake to those services that are already successfully working for external clients.

External communications on behalf of a Partner Council

Where we are acting and writing on behalf of a Council to an external person or organisation, changes will be made to letterheads etc. to give greater emphasis to the Council branding rather than oneSource.

Examples will include letters to residents from Legal Services or Revenues & Benefits or from Property Services to a developer. However some services that have agreement from their Director, such as Enforcement Services, will continue to use the oneSource brand for external communications.

There's no need to make any changes now. Templates and guidance will be developed and rolled out over the next couple of months but you may want to discuss the changes in teams and if there are any areas of branding that we have missed. If you have any questions, please contact the [Business Development team](#).

Thank you

Executive Director

Appendix 2 – Objectives evaluation

Focus	Statement	LG benchmark	2016 result	2021 result
Corporate strategy	I am aware of the aims and objectives of oneSource in helping the councils achieve outcomes.	X	59%	
	The actions of senior managers are consistent with the values of the shared service.	X	43%	
Business development	I feel well informed about what is happening within oneSource and the councils.	X	52%	
	Communication is good between service areas.	X	22%	
Employee focus	I am encouraged to propose new ideas and to improve the quality of our services to service users.	74%	X	
	I have the opportunity for personal development and growth.	51%	X	
Overall	I satisfied working for the shared service.	72%	56%	
	I am proud to work for all three councils.	67%	58%	