

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	9 September 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Internal Communications and Employee Engagement Platforms – analysis
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/261
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Sandie Scott and Paula Fullerton
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.4

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report follows on from a report to Staff Governance Committee in January 2024 (CUS/24/023), where it was agreed that a further report would be brought to Committee to provide an analysis of the performance of our current digital methods of Internal Communications – with activity data to show employees accessing SharePoint and ‘Open Forum’ (Viva Engage), taking into consideration the recent public consultations which had also been promoted to staff .

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1. Notes the performance of internal communications and employee engagement.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1. The Aberdeen City Council intranet was first launched, alongside Viva Engage (then called Yammer) in late 2019. Prior to this we held employee communications in multiple locations and communicated through multiple platforms. These included: email cascades, The Zone, People Anytime on WordPress, The Transformation Zone on WordPress and a Chief Executive’s blog on WordPress. Our collaboration with Microsoft gave us the opportunity to consolidate these platforms within the Microsoft universe.
- 3.2. Our vision for internal communications and employee engagement has been developed with a strong focus on culture bringing in our guiding principles - Purpose, Pride, Team, Trust and Value to provide a strong frame work and set of tools for all employees.

3.3. Reaching such a diverse audience across a range of locations, work patterns and needs has its challenges. To address the need and challenges for communication, engagement and support during organisational change, we have developed an approach which is inclusive and engaging for employees in all our job families. This approach, approved by the Committee in January 2023, as part of the Workforce Delivery Plan to support Target Operating Model (TOM) 1.2, is our ACC Approach to Change Management which provides practical resources under seven key areas for leaders of changes to implement.

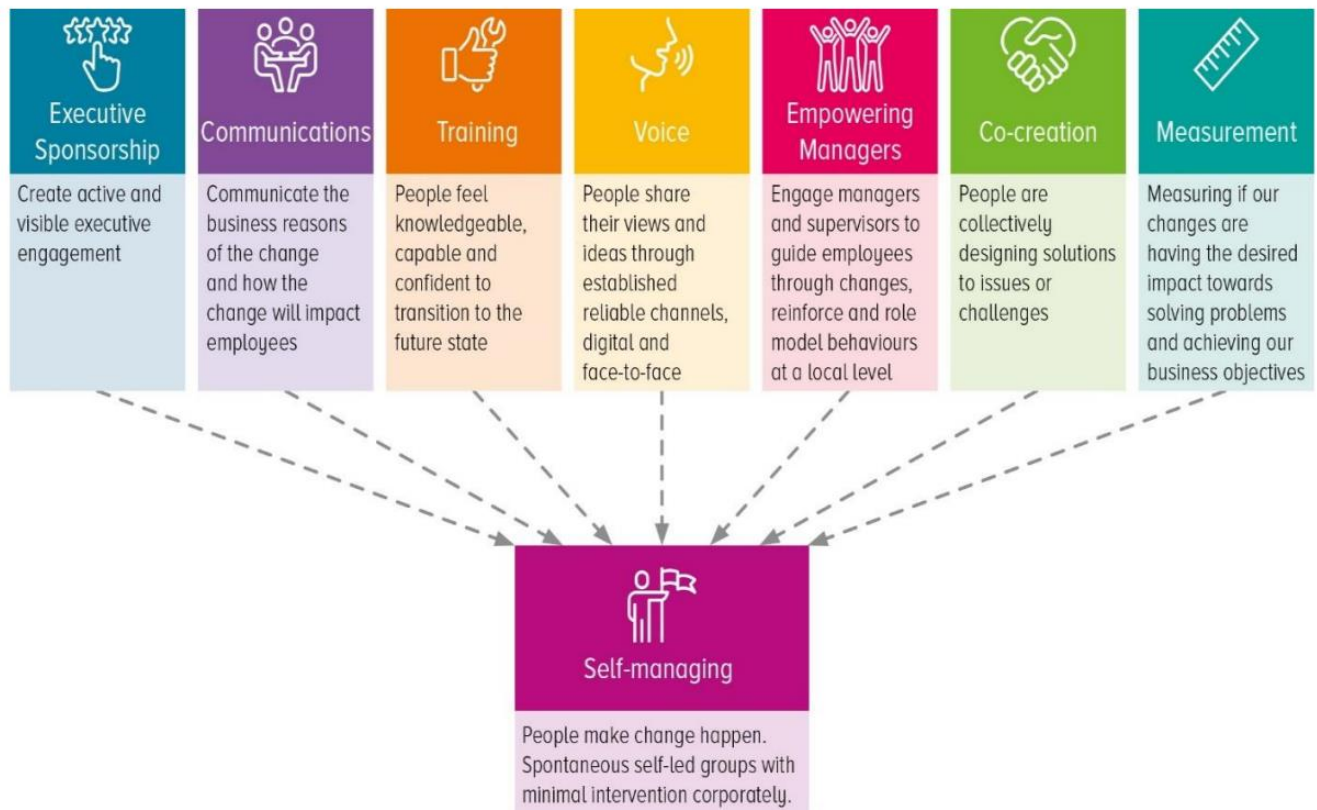


Figure 1: ACC Approach to Change

3.4. The report in January 2024 provided a detailed description of our approach to Internal Communications, with information about the technical, style and content of the all employee intranet.

3.5. The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of the performance of our SharePoint based intranet and Viva Engage, an open chat forum.

Platform Performance Analysis

3.6. **SharePoint Intranet:** our internal communication hub consists of a number of SharePoint sub sites which collectively make up the Intranet. These include:

- [Intranet Home](#) – corporate messages, news, Chief Executive’s blog
- [People Anytime](#) - pay, annual leave, employee relations, policies
- [Digital Workplace](#) – digital news and transformation

- [Green Workplace](#) – climate change and net zero
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion hub](#) – equalities and inclusion

Please note the above links are only available for those accessing through an Aberdeen City Council networked device.

3.6.1 Usage figures for the past 90 days (the maximum we are able to view through SharePoint analytics) show us that traffic levels are reasonably consistent throughout the day but with highs in the early morning. Over the last 12 weeks SharePoint highlights Tuesday 8am has the highest traffic – as seen in the graphic below.

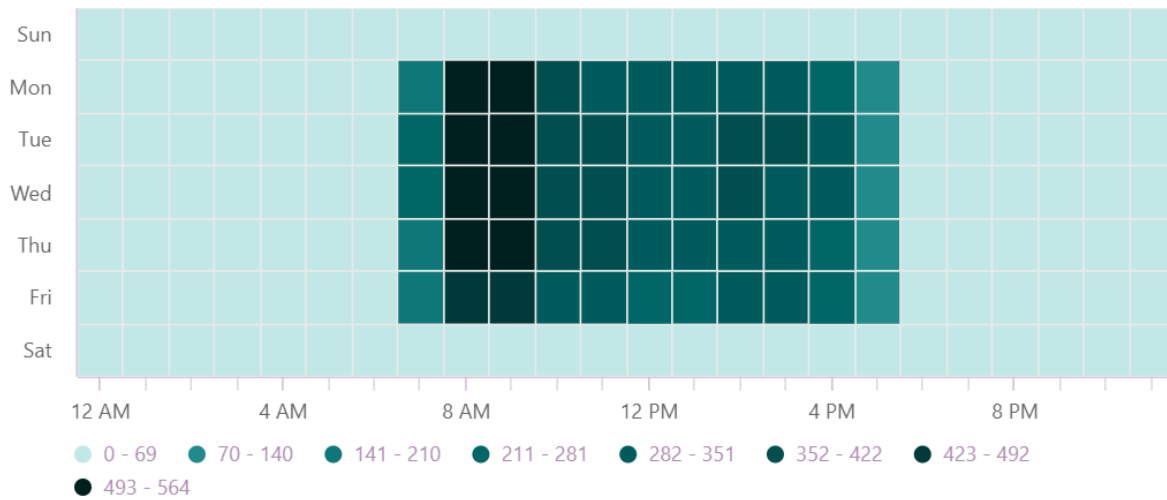


Figure 2: Intranet Hub Site usage analytics

3.6.2 This pattern is repeated on each of the subsites with a slight exception on People Anytime. As indicated on the graphic below People Anytime sees the highest traffic on Monday 9am with peaks also seen Monday 2pm and Friday 9am.

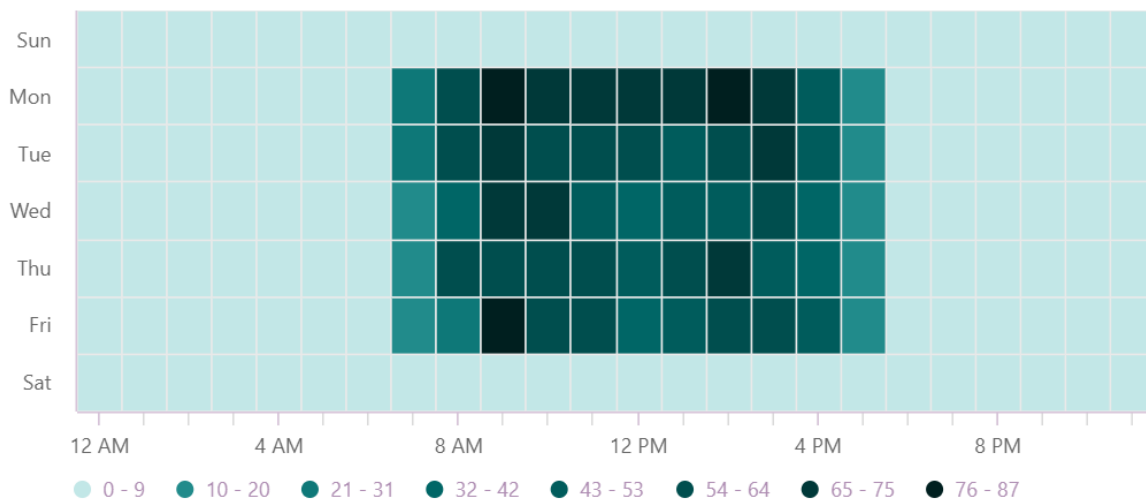


Figure 3: PeopleAnytime analytics

3.6.3 Popular Pages and Content: SharePoint analytics is currently limited in the data it provides: overall site visits can be viewed by 7, 30 and 90 days – but no further back. The top ten most popular pages is only available for the last 7 days. As such it is difficult to accurately monitor the popularity of pages over a longer period of time.

3.6.4 The following table has been generated manually by looking at individual page view figures - see Figure 4 below for an example of how this appears. The table pulls out the most recent posts with views above 300 for the past month and also highlights those with high numbers from the first 6 months of 2024 (January to June).



Figure 4: to show total number of views a page has received over its lifetime

Page title	Author	Views	Published	Site
July 2024				
Supporting Colleagues after Traumatic Events	Fiona Lindsay	506	25 July	People Anytime
Chief Officer Blog: Equality and Diversity	Isla Newcombe	395	19 July	ED&I hub
Aspiring Leaders programme is open for applications	Sandie Scott	714	12 July	People Anytime
Director Blog: Julie Wood appointment as Chief Officer- City Development and Regeneration	Gale Beattie	551	12 July	Intranet
Festival of the Sea	Suzie Watt	603	11 July	Intranet
Marischal College and Town House Fire Alarm – out of hours	Andy Campbell	945	9 July	Intranet
Chief Exec Blog: General Election Thanks	Angela Scott	366	5 July	Intranet
Chief Exec Blog: Scottish Prison Service early release	Angela Scott	402	4 July	Intranet
Switch off for Summer	Sara Cameron	375	3 July	Green Workplace
Christmas Carvery at the Beach Ballroom	Robert Dean	422	3 July	Intranet
Postal Vote update	Internal Comms	330	2 July	Intranet
January to June 2024				
Marischal College Littlejohn Street staff entrance	Lee Taylor	1141	13 June	Intranet
General Election - Pre election period	Alan Thomson	987	28 May	Intranet
Service vulnerability - restart Google Chrome	Lita Greenwell	853	25 April	Intranet

Page title	Author	Views	Published	Site
Continuous Review & Development (CR&D) end of year review	People Development	820	24 April	People Anytime
Your email signature	Internal comms	1984	19 April	Intranet
Grampian Pride 2024	Kirsty George	850	18 April	ED&I hub
Changes to Flexible Working	Employee Relations	1209	1 April	People Anytime
Director Blog: Appointment of Chief Officer Governance	Andy MacDonald	1208	27 March	Intranet
Chief Exec Blog: Organisational redesign – new structure update	Angela Scott	2125	22 March	Intranet
Budget 2024/25 – year ahead part one	Internal comms	1237	18 March	Intranet
New Printing Contract	Jodie Forbes	835	6 March	Digital workplace
Please read: Scam email to city council staff ‘from Angela’	Lita Greenwell	1269	16 February	Digital Workplace
CR&D Update	People Development	1080	9 February	People Anytime
Chief Exec Blog: proposed changes to structure approved	Angela Scott	1992	7 February	Intranet
Proposed new structure - report now live	Lindsay MacInnes	2080	1 February	Intranet
Weather waring issued - 15-18 Jan	Internal Comms	851	15 January	Intranet
Flexi period 2024	Julie Esson	2954	9 January	People Anytime

3.6.5 It is clear from the statistics above that pages relating to any impacts on how we work, such as restructures, new ways of working; tools to help how we work – flexi cards, email signatures, CR&D; and messages around cyber security have all received high viewing figures over the past 6 months. As highlighted posts and details on our new structure or changes to the way we work have had particularly high traffic.

3.6.6 Additional engagement with the pages: Alongside page view, colleagues can also engage with pages through comment and likes. As with social media a ‘Like’ is a kind of engagement with the readers and appears as a thumbs up on the bottom of each page. Authors are notified when a page receives a like or a comment. Readers are more likely to like or comment on good news posts such as new appointments or award wins.

3.6.7 There is no centralised way to monitor likes and comments through SharePoint analytics, this must be checked manually. An example of a recent page with both can be found at - [Director Blog: Julie Wood appointed Chief Officer - City Development and Regeneration \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

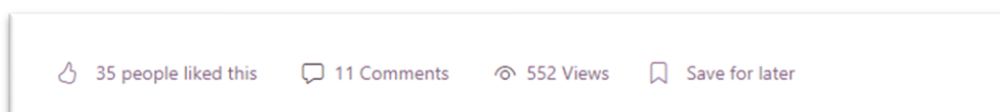


Figure 5 to show how employee interactions with pages are recorded.

3.6.8 When publishing a page, there is also the ability to turn off the comment function. This is used for any proposals where it is useful to consolidate and focus the conversation via Viva Engage or, as in the example of the 35-hour working week, through an online survey.

3.6.9 WordPress Intranet: In addition to our SharePoint intranet sites, which are only accessible for those accessing through an Aberdeen City Council networked device, we have a WordPress-based microsite for People Anytime. This site is available to everyone without requiring an ACC log-in and provides essential employee information like staff policies, annual leave, and payroll, making it easy for all employees, including frontline workers, to access these resources. Although site traffic is low, the analysis from the past 28 days shows the following:

WordPress page	Page views
Home Page	1155
CoreHR	310
Opportunities Hub	267
Salary Information	244
Home page / Archives	240
CoreHR - New to CoreHR - Accessing Your Digital Payslip	188
Pay	170
Managing Vacancies	135
Long Service Award Scheme	106
Recruitment, Talent and Opportunities	101
CoreHR - Guides	53
Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing	47
ACC Learn - Online Learning	41*
Flexible Working	37
Increase or Decrease in Contracted Hours	36
Leave	36
Special Leave	36
About Travel & Subsistence Claims	31
Travel and Subsistence	30
All Forms	27
re.cr.uit	23
Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement (VS/ER)	22
Managing Performance	22
Payroll Deadlines and Claim Forms	21
Flexible Retirement Scheme	20

**This figure relates to views of the ACC Learn WordPress information page not logins to the ACC Learn training portal. Specific /visitor figures to the ACC Learn portal are not available in this format, however we can say that so far in 2024 - 6,432 users have logged into the system at least once.*

3.7 Viva Engage Analysis

- 3.7.1** Viva Engage is a Microsoft programme that allows interactive communication between the council and employees, functioning similarly to X (formerly Twitter). As a two-way communication platform, it helps promote a culture of engagement and wellbeing among the workforce.
- 3.7.2** The significant advantage of this communication method over email is that it also reaches all frontline employees who have opted to use their own device and install the Viva Engage app. The 'All Company' community consists of our entire workforce and has 8,790 members, providing us with an effective and direct means of cascading corporate communication with all employees. When an important organisation-wide message is required we can send an announcement on All Company which will 'ping' the email inbox for all staff, or in the app for mobile users. We now use this method rather than an all staff email. Some examples of recent announcements include:
- 19 July- recent Microsoft global outage announcement – seen by 3349 staff
 - 6 June – Nominations for Star Awards extension – seen by 3391 staff
- 3.7.3** Our open forum community 'Ask a Colleague' allows any member of staff to ask questions and for colleagues to provide an answer. Questions asked range from questions around contacts within the council to queries around current projects. An example is shown below:

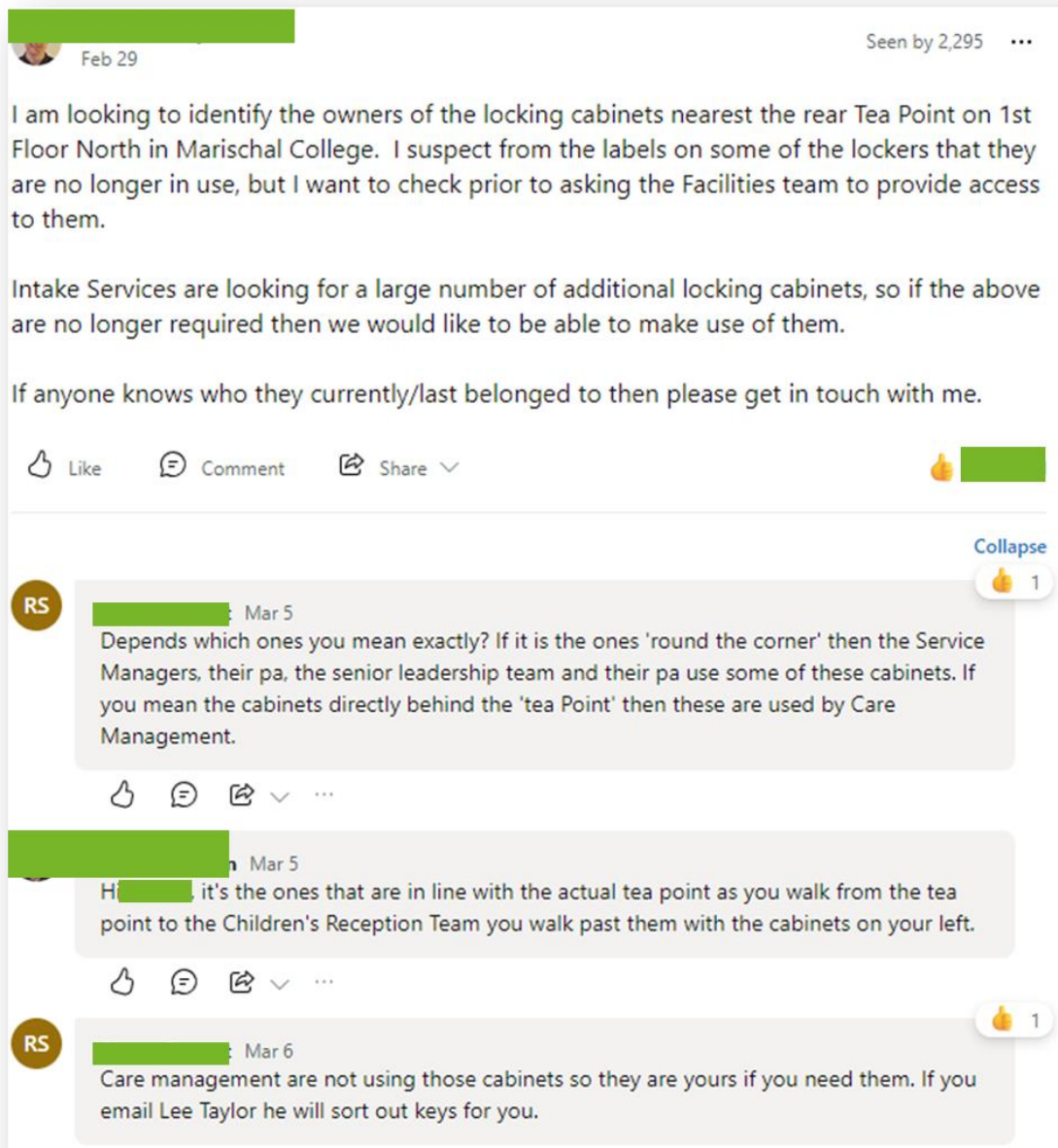


Figure 6 to show colleagues helping each other via Viva Engage

3.7.4 We also use Viva Engage to circulate activity around and encourage sign up to recent surveys and encourage suggestions for transformation projects. By creating various communities within Viva Engage we can cater to specific groups of employees who can choose the groups they are interested in.

3.7.5 Analysis of some of our current communities from the past 28 days (5 July to 2 August 2024) include:

Communities	Members	Posted messages	Read messages	Reacted to messages
All Company	8,790	3	30.63K	14
People Anytime	164	5	4.86K	1

Employee benefits	383	0	264	0
Digital Workplace	207	0	49	0
Classifieds	454	14	7.34K	5
Green Workplace	214	5	3.8K	8
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	116	17	4.09K	21
Mental health and wellbeing	821	9	10.62K	22
Ask a colleague	247	26	23.47K	35
Latest opportunities	352	1	2.68K	1
Menopause – employee peer support	64	1	415	9
Craft lovers	44	0	15	0

Members – people who have chosen to follow the page and therefore get updates on all posts. All staff can see all posts from all communities without having to be a member.

Read messages – total count of views on posts from members and non-members. This count is not unique as a user can revisit a thread and be registered as a view again.

Reacted to messages – staff who have liked or commented on a post. Unlike social media, where likes are often used to express interest, viva engage users may not always feel the need to acknowledge a post that they have read and found useful. The culture of viva engage is to read the information, not always acknowledge it.

3.8 External Communication

3.8.1 While this report is about intranet communications it cannot be fully divorced from external factors. Any stories issued by the council or our partners which could have an impact on staff are shared on our platforms where appropriate. In addition, where we anticipate something is likely to 'hit the press' and impact staff, we have an internal comms cascade to prevent the sense of hearing about it in the press first. Recent examples of when we have worked closely with external communications can be seen around the 2023/24 budget consultation. This includes sharing on the Intranet, Viva Exchange and with Service Managers on Teams for onward sharing. An example can be seen below:

📣 **Announcement** posted in All Company



Paula Fullerton

Jun 30, 2023

Seen by 4,952 ...

Aberdeen City Council has launched a landmark public consultation that will help shape the 2024/25 Budget and future spending plans. - [Budget consultation launched by Council \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

The results will be shared with all Elected Members to help them decide how to allocate funds for running services and set council tax and fees and charges, whilst ensuring the council continues to meet its many statutory duties.

Phase 1 will run until the end of July and invites all citizens of Aberdeen, including our employees, to identify what they think should be the council's spending priorities for the financial year 24/25.

As employees of Aberdeen City Council your vote is just as important and we invite you to submit your own votes on the [budget simulator](#).

The results of Phase 1 will be reported to Full Council in August as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. This will set out the estimated position for the years 2024/25 to 2027/28 and be the basis for Phase 2 of the consultation, which will be held in autumn.

Phase 2 will provide the chance to explore detailed options for producing a balanced budget, including finding necessary savings against an annual spend of more than £560 million. As part of Phase 2 employees will once again be invited to take part in the consultation exercise. More details on Phase 2 will be published in due course.

In the meantime full instructions on how to use the simulator and the consultation, including FAQs, can be found on the [Aberdeen City Council website](#).

Key city stakeholders and organisations are also being contacted to take part and feedback from both consultation phases which will inform the Budget setting early next year.



Budget consultation launched by Council

Aberdeen City Council has launched a landmark public consultation that will help shape the 2024/25 Budget and future spending plans. The results will be shared with all Elected Members to help them decide how to allocate funds

Figure 7 to show external news being reported internally

3.9 Further developments plans

- 3.9.1** Upcoming advancements in SharePoint analysis include a new SharePoint Page Diagnostics tool which provides page performance details like page loading time and mobile viewing experience and offers suggestions for improvement.
- 3.9.2** It is known that the intranet does not open by default in all laptops and that it does not open by default when you open a new tab. This is believed to be an issue with Microsoft Edge and a solution is being investigated by Digital and Technology.
- 3.9.3** SharePoint can only be accessed when logged into the council network on a council device. Whilst this offers increased security it also means information cannot be accessed when not at work.
- 3.9.4** Microsoft Licensing agreements mean that some frontline staff cannot currently access SharePoint. This means we have a requirement to duplicate some staff information in our old intranet site – People Anytime on WordPress. This requires a duplication of work. Digital and Technology are investigating a solution. In the meantime we rely on Teams channels for liaison with frontline managers to make sure key messages are reaching out.*
- 3.9.5** The new version of the chatbot AB1 is not currently available as a plugin for the Intranet. If this were available it would give us some intelligence around the type of questions being asked by staff and allow us to tailor content accordingly.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The approach to internal communications and employee engagement outlined in this report assists the Council fulfil its statutory duties to inform and consult with its employees.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No known environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	None		L	Yes
Compliance	None		L	Yes
Operational	None		L	Yes
Financial	None		L	Yes
Reputational	None		L	Yes
Environment / Climate	None		L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>Valuing our Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that the Council depends upon its staff to deliver the services it provides and believe the Council must properly reward, train and support its staff. Engage regularly with staff and trade union representatives. <p>These proposals take forward the enabling strategies and transformation programme articulated within the TOM 1.2, and form part of the next steps for delivery of the outcomes and commitments.</p>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Our approach to Internal Communications and Employee Engagement supports all stretch outcomes through providing a platform and methodology for the communication and engagement with the workforce on the LOIP.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	As above.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	As above.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	It is confirmed by Chief Officer Isla Newcombe, that no integrated impact assessment is required for this report. This report does however link to the existing draft IIA of Organisational Redesign
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Workforce Delivery Plan](#)
- 10.2 [Job Families and the Capability Framework](#)
- 10.3 [Workforce Plan Progress Update](#)
- 10.4 [The Four Enablers - Engage for Success](#)
- 10.5 [The Scottish Approach to Service Design \(SAatSD\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

11. APPENDICES

None

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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