

**DD DECISION – DD 10**

**Title: PART-TIME COMMUNICATIONS SECONDMENT**

**Executive summary**

With the Director of Communications, Engagement and Strategy on maternity leave and the Head of Communications and Engagement covering this role as an interim, there is a gap in capacity within the Communications, Engagement and Strategy team that will last for the remainder of 2025.

As a result of OPDC finalising its Old Oak illustrative masterplan, preparing to launch procurement for a delivery partner and as a new Chief Executive is joining later this year, this has resulted in an intensive work programme for OPDC. As a result, there is an immediate need to rapidly appoint a temporary specialist Communications Manager for the period from spring / summer until the end of 2025. To fulfil this requirement for additional resource, OPDC is seeking to arrange a part-time secondment based at OPDC for a period of two days a week (on average). This will support adequate resourcing of the Communications and Engagement team within OPDC to manage reputation for the organisation and its relationship with media, partners, stakeholders and local communities up to the point at which the team has its full permanent headcount.

**Decision**

That the Interim Director of Communications and Engagement approves:

- i. Expenditure of up to £100,000 on a secondment post for a specialist Communications Manager to support the Communications and Engagement team.
- ii. This requirement to be fulfilled through a seven-month secondment post to address the temporary resourcing gap, to be provided by the London Communications Agency (LCA), an organisation with extensive experience of delivering communications and marketing support within the built environment and an existing understanding of OPDC's vision, values and work priorities.

**Interim Director of Communications, Engagement & Strategy – Matthew Neylan**

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and has my approval.

**Signature**



**Date:** 03/07/2025

## **PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

### **1. Background and context**

- 1.1 The Communications and Engagement team sits within the Chief Executive's Office within OPDC. It is led by the Director of Communications, Engagement and Strategy who is part of the organisation's Senior Management Team.
- 1.2 In late-2024, a new post was created, the Head of Communications and Engagement, to provide day-to-day leadership and bolster capacity and skills, recognising that the team required additional resource as OPDC's delivery programme continued to accelerate. The Head of Communications and Engagement was appointed in December 2024.
- 1.3 The Director of Communications, Engagement and Strategy went on maternity leave in January with the Head of Communications and Engagement stepping into the Director role on an interim basis until December 2025. The Head of Communications and Engagement role will remain vacant during this period.
- 1.4 The Communications Officer position in the team is also currently vacant, following the departure of the existing postholder in February, with recruitment underway for a replacement. This role provides communications support across the team, including monitoring Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) and Mayoral Questions, drafting written materials such as internal newsletters and event publicity, administering financial and quarterly reporting, and organising team logistics and meetings.
- 1.5 Recruitment will commence shortly for a Digital Communications Manager to build OPDC's digital and social media presence including the development of a new microsite and refreshed corporate web presence.
  - Given the changes within the team indicated above, there is an immediate need to rapidly bolster skilled resource for the period from summer until the end of 2025. A temporary seconded officer in the role of a specialist Communications Manager is required to deliver significant communications priorities including communications around the Old Oak illustrative masterplan and the launch of procurement for a delivery partner, which will require the preparation and delivery of an intensive communications campaign.
- 1.6 This funding will provide:
  - A skilled experienced communications resource on a secondment basis for an average of two days a week from summer until December 2025.
  - The secondee will develop comprehensive communications strategies aligned with OPDC's vision, goals and values; organise events and launches; handle media relations; support community engagement and public consultation initiatives; and support OPDC's presence at industry events.
  - They will play a vital role in planning and delivering communications around the forthcoming procurement of a delivery partner, maximising positive profile opportunities for OPDC and the Old Oak scheme.
  - The anticipated costs are calculated as follows:
    - Agency secondee day rate: £1,150 per day
    - Chargeable days: 2 days a week × 4.33 weeks = 8.67 days per month

- Monthly invoice: £10,500 (includes 5% disbursement allowance)
- Total for 7-month secondment: £73,500 (not including VAT)

1.7 Access to senior counsel and crisis communications support will also be available within the overall budget envelope but will only be drawn upon if required.

## **2. The proposal and how it will be delivered**

2.1 To address temporarily reduced team capacity, OPDC is seeking to arrange a part-time secondment. The main capacity gaps are in communications, however, the nature of OPDC's work means strong community engagement experience will be important for the secondee.

2.2 Examples of the kinds of work the secondee is anticipated to perform include:

- Drafting and implementing comprehensive communications strategies aligned with OPDC's vision, goals and values.
- Drafting media releases, media statements and Q&A / FAQs.
- Support with the organising of events and launches, contributing to the thinking around themes, planning logistics and guest lists, and preparing and issuing invitations.
- Drafting and reviewing publicity materials, including posters, internal and external newsletters and exhibition display boards.
- Supporting OPDC's presence at industry events – including finding and booking speaker opportunities and drafting briefings for attendees.
- Planning and delivering communications around the forthcoming procurement of a delivery partner, working closely with communications and engagement colleagues and with OPDC's delivery team to maximise positive profile opportunities for OPDC and the Old Oak scheme in the lead up to and following the procurement launch.

2.3 The above work priorities require skilled resource knowledgeable in communications to support major regeneration projects and with a track record of working with public authorities. The spend will ensure the in-house team has sufficient communications resource to support the rapid progress being made with OPDC's delivery programme - ensuring stakeholder, community and industry audiences are kept up to date.

2.4 Support through a secondment from London Communications Agency (LCA) is proposed to ensure rapid mobilisation, not reliant on lengthy recruitment processes and notice periods, and in recognition that the resource gap is only temporary and will be resolved when the permanent Director of Communications, Engagement and Strategy returns towards the end of the year.

## **3. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 3.1 It is anticipated that the appointed secondee will deliver the following objectives and expected outcomes of OPDC:
- 3.2 Effective handling of key milestones to the benefit of OPDC's reputation and demonstrating the organisation's capability to deliver, including (but not limited to):
- Publication of the Old Oak Illustrative Masterplan following extensive community and stakeholder engagement.
  - Launch of procurement for a delivery partner.
  - London Real Estate Forum (September 2025) - OPDC is a Place Partner at the event meaning we will have a speaking panel opportunity.
  - Senior staffing changes and associated profiling opportunities with a new CEO joining OPDC later this year.
- 3.3 Support for development of communications strategies and plans for Old Oak, land assembly and delivery partner procurement ensuring a well-planned approach to stakeholder, community and media communications.
- 3.4 It is estimated that an average of two days per week will be required to fulfil these support needs, with one dedicated day spent at OPDC's offices and an additional full day equivalent worked remotely (this additional time may be spread across several weekdays depending on project priorities).

#### **4. Strategic fit**

- 4.1 By bolstering skilled resource within the team, the secondment provides the capacity to deliver on OPDC's values as set out in its Corporate Strategy - ambition, collaboration, stewardship, inclusivity, curiosity and integrity.
- 4.2 It builds capacity for the Communications and Engagement team to collaborate with communities; to communicate the ambition of Old Oak as an exemplar new place; to champion the rich diversity of the Old Oak and Park Royal area (and London and West London) in the organisation's communications; to continually learn from others' experiences; to take stewardship of the area; and to act on verbal commitments.
- 4.3 The secondment links with OPDC's four pillars, set out below, particularly delivery (supporting the organisation during a pivotal year which will shape a vision for Old Oak and seek a partner or partners to work with OPDC to deliver this) and community (ensuring the vision and OPDC's wider activities understand and reflect local needs and aspirations).
- *Delivery – Realising ambition through action.*
  - *Community – A place for everyone, reflecting local needs and aspirations.*
  - *Innovation – Creating a sustainable and prosperous future.*
  - *Core Functions – An efficient and equitable team, fit for the future.*
- 4.4 With a London Growth Plan published by the Mayor of London earlier this year and Towards a New London Plan setting the direction of travel for London's next

strategic blueprint it is vital that OPDC plays its part in delivering the capital's potential for new growth, homes, and opportunity - and communicates the progress it is making.

## **5. Project governance and assurance**

- 5.1 The secondee will be managed by the Interim Director of Communications and Engagement and will work closely with the Communications and External Relations Manager. They will work for OPDC on average for two days a week until December 2025.

## **6. Risk, Issues and Opportunities**

- 6.1 Risk - utilising of external personnel rather than in-house resource could risk diluting communication of the vision, mission and values of OPDC.
- 6.2 Mitigation – OPDC will ensure that the appointed secondee has a strong understanding of OPDC's corporate strategy and values and the communities which make up the OPDC area. This will be achieved through an effective induction programme and ongoing support from the wider communications team on message and strategy development.
- 6.3 Opportunity - the increased resource will support communications that are well-planned and executed, ensuring those with an interest in OPDC's activities are kept well-informed and closely involved.

## **7. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Comments**

- 7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, OPDC must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.<sup>1</sup>
- 7.2 Good communications and engagement play vital roles in achieving the objectives of OPDC's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the Mayor of London's strategic objectives for EDI. Greater resource will improve the capacity of the OPDC team to keep all local communities and stakeholders regularly updated on OPDC's activities. It will support a planned, strategic approach to communications that celebrates the rich diversity of the OPDC area and takes a tailored approach to reach all audiences including 'seldom heard' groups.

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<sup>1</sup> The protected characteristics and groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. Fulfilling this duty involves having due regard to: the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a protected characteristic or one that is connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The duty must be exercised with an open mind and at the time a Decision is taken in the exercise of the OPDC's functions.

## **8. Social Value**

- 8.1 OPDC's approach to social value delivery is made up of a series of "priority themes" that articulate its ambitions and OPDC is a signatory to the GLA Group's Responsible Procurement Plan.
- 8.2 The part-time secondment will help to deliver against OPDC's priority themes by ensuring these are prioritised in OPDC's communications:
- **Sustainability** – Deliver a place where we drive the highest standards in sustainability, supporting the Mayor's net zero by 2030 carbon target
  - **Inclusive Growth** – Using our investment activities to deliver jobs, skills, business and education benefits for all. Payment of the London Living Wage is mandated.
  - **Community Engagement** – Meaningful and participative long-term engagement to inform, involve and empower the communities and businesses we serve.
  - **Design Quality** – The key principles, processes and technical requirements needed to embed the highest standards of design and place-making.
- 8.3 Of the four priority themes above, the secondment is anticipated to have the greatest impact on community engagement as set out in the previous section covering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

## **9. Other considerations**

- 9.1 There are no other considerations that need to be considered in the taking of this decision.

## **10. Conflicts of interest**

- 10.1 No one involved in the preparation or clearance of this Form, or its substantive proposal, has any conflict of interest.

## **11. Financial comments**

- 11.1 The funding is sought from the establishment line within Comms & Engagement directorate, there are currently 3 vacancies within Comms & Engagement with an active recruitment on the Digital Communications Manager. Based on the remaining 2 vacancies if the Digital Communication Manager is recruited to there is headroom for this post which equates to circa £15,000 a monthly basis and can therefore this post is affordable within the existing envelope.

## **12. Legal comments**

- 12.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Interim Director of Communications and Engagement concern the exercise of the OPDC's general powers, falling within the OPDC's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or that are facilitate of, or conducive or incidental to,

the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development or improvement of the environment, in Greater London.

12.2 In implementing the proposals of which a decision is sought, officers should comply with the OPDC's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people:
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
- consult with appropriate bodies.

12.3 In taking the decisions requested, as noted in section 7 above, the Interim Director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. To this end, the Interim Director should have particular regard to section 7 (above) of this report.

12.4 Section 1 of this report indicates that the sought budget concerns payment for services. The services required should be procured in accordance with the OPDC's Contract and Funding Code and officers must ensure that appropriate contract documentation is put in place between OPDC and London Communications Agency before the commencement of the services requested under this decision form.

## Appendices

- None

## Other supporting papers

- None

### **PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Information in this Form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). OPDC aims to publish the Form within three working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the Decision (for example, impacting a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date (when it will be published). Deferral periods are kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

#### **Part 1 – Deferral**

Publication of this Part 1 is to be deferred: **No**

The deferral is until: **N/A**

This is because: **N/A**

#### **Part 2 – Confidential information**

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in or attached to any separate Part 2 Form, together with the rationale for withholding the information at this time.

There is a separate and confidential Part 2 Form: **No**

## DECLARATIONS

**Drafting officer:** Matthew Neylan has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirm that:



**Advice:** The Governance, Finance and Legal teams have commented on the proposal.



## CONFIRMATIONS

**Section 106 funding:** This use of S106 to fund the expenditure proposal was approved via a Section 106 spend proposal form on N/A.

**Review:** This Decision was circulated for **Senior Review** on 11/06/2025.

**Executive Director, Finance & Operations – Gurdip Juty**

Financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this Form.

**Signature:**



**Date:** 04/07/2025