

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

[REDACTED]
(By email)

Our Ref: MGLA181120-0258

22 December 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for information which the Greater London Authority (GLA) received on 17 November 2020. Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

You requested:

In paragraph 6.11 of the Mayor's draft Budget submission for 2021/22 put to the Assembly Budget and Performance Committee yesterday it states:-

"A recent review of the GLA's press and digital communications functions by Bloomberg Associates observed that the team is "a highly functioning office that operates extremely professionally and is a reference for other cities and organizations, especially with regard to traditional and social media communication"."

Please can you supply me with a copy of the full report.

Our response is below:

I can confirm that we do hold a copy of the review you describe. A copy is attached.

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, quoting the reference MGLA181120-0258.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Information Governance Officer

If you are unhappy with the way the GLA has handled your request, you may complain using the GLA's FOI complaints and internal review procedure, available at:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>

To: Paddy Hennessy, Leah Kreitzman, Niran Mothada, Emma Strain, Katharine Segal
From: Bloomberg Associates
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020
Subject: External Affairs Office Recommendations

OVERVIEW AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bloomberg Associates was asked to review the processes and organizational structure of the Greater London Authority's External Relations team to determine if there are areas for improvement, specifically focused on the Press and Digital Communications teams. We conducted a series of interviews with staff members to better understand the operations and workflow of the teams, and we also examined organizational structures from other city governments and entities to gain further awareness of best practices.

Our overall observations are that, compared to similar cities, the organization is a highly functioning office that operates extremely professionally and is a reference for other cities and organizations, especially with regard to traditional and social media communication. Additionally, all the teams we interviewed have a full workload and produce high-quality work. Despite this high level of skill and outputs, we did find several areas for improvement that should be addressed in order to maximize efficiencies, coordination, skills, and outputs across teams:

1. The Digicomms and Press teams do not operate in a cohesive way and are somewhat disjointed, leading to missed opportunities in terms of communications impact.
2. The GLA's current structure lends itself to creating siloes, as the teams currently operate across different reporting lines into the Mayor's Office.
3. The teams do not have a full understanding of the needs of the other teams with whom they work, which also affects efficiencies, collaboration, and outputs.

Based on these observations, we recommend that the External Affairs team takes the following actions:

1. We recommend that the GLA restructure the External Affairs Office to integrate Press and Digicomms into one team to improve coordination and enhance information sharing.
2. The GLA's structure is notable in that there are two Directors with shared oversight of communications (Mayoral Director of Communications and Mayoral Director of External and International Affairs). In order to create a cohesive strategy between these complementary workstreams, we suggest the GLA consider implementing a leadership role that is responsible for the direction and coordination of the Mayor's communications and has oversight of these workstreams. This role could be placed within the "corporate" structure or in the Mayor's Office and would also be responsible for creating and directing long-lead strategy for the Press and Digicomms teams.
3. Teams across the External Affairs Office should be upskilled in different focus areas, to enhance their skills and improve understanding and coordination between all the teams. Specifically, the Press team should undergo a training, or a series of trainings, to build skills focused on incorporating social media strategy into daily work. Similarly, the Digicomms team would benefit from a training, or series of trainings, that would improve their understanding of the press team's regular requirements and daily outputs. We believe that all teams at GLA could benefit from similar cross-trainings with a specific focus on social media skills, but feel that it will be particularly beneficial for the Press team.
4. There are opportunities to enhance information sharing within the GLA, including long-lead coordination across the Press, Digicomms, and Marketing teams, as well as the Mayor's Private Office.

More detailed information on each recommendation is outlined on the following pages.

I. RESTRUCTURE

1. The Press and Digicomms team currently operate somewhat independently from one another. This is partially due to the current organizational structure. We recommend that the GLA consider restructuring so that Press and Digicomms work more closely together. Our suggested structure would combine the Press and Digicomms teams into one integrated team (while maintaining specializations within) to promote coordination and collaboration from the early stages of announcements and projects.
 - o It is worth noting that the Digicomms team is much smaller than other teams in the Communications Department. We recommend that the GLA consider adding staff to this critical public communications group.
2. Based on our experience and research, it is best practice to have a senior role that has direct oversight over both the press team and the social media team. This role provides a strategic vision that aligns with the Mayor's priorities and vision and ensures that teams are aligned on messaging. At present, the GLA's Press team and Digicomms team are operating independently from one another, and approvals happen in parallel rather than in conjunction. We suggest implementing a senior position that directs and manages both areas according to Mayoral priorities, which would help with consistency and collaboration as well as helping to streamline the approval process.

II. UPSKILL STAFF AND INCREASE CAPACITY

1. There is an opportunity to organize training for staff during upcoming political purdah. This could include cross training or staff swaps between Press and Digicomms and specific advanced social media training for press officers. While the Press team is highly functional in the traditional media space, the team does not regularly incorporate social media strategy into their daily work processes and outputs. As media and press continue to become more integrated with social media and digital content, it is imperative that press officers use social media strategy and planning in their daily work. This training and upskilling will result in well-coordinated teams that have a clear understanding of each other's areas of expertise, and that will be skilled in multiple areas, with a focus on social media.
2. Much of the Press team's time is taken up by media monitoring and transcription of Mayoral interviews and events. It is more common for these tasks to be taken on by an agency or a separate team, rather than as part of the responsibility of the Press team. We advise that the GLA enlist the help of an automated transcription service or media monitoring service so that the Press team can better focus on their core responsibilities.

III. ENHANCE INFORMATION SHARING

1. At a high level, there is no fully detailed calendar or document that outlines planned outputs across all teams. While this is being implemented at the Press and Digicomms team level to enhance coordination, the overall organization would benefit from alignment at a higher level on upcoming events or announcements, key messaging, and suggested outputs. We recommend that a document or form be created to share these details across teams, and include the following information:
 - a. Event/announcement date, time, and location
 - b. Key messaging points
 - c. Link to draft or final press release (where relevant)
 - d. Social media draft posts
 - e. Potential 3rd party surrogates
2. Ensuring that the Press and Digicomms teams have access to finalized information from the Mayor's Private Office is essential to communicating the correct messages and talking points to the public. The Private Office and GLA teams should work more closely together before and after events, and create a system to share final documents from the Private Office to the GLA.

3. As the team currently operates, there are many meetings that are meant to align teams on upcoming messages, news, and daily outputs. However, our interviews revealed that these meetings do not always include the appropriate members of all relevant teams. The GLA should conduct a review of meeting attendees to ensure that these meetings:
 - a. Include the appropriate team members; and
 - b. Occur at intervals that are conducive to all stages of planning (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly, 6-weekly).