

West London Partnership Communications Audit:

Executive summary

The overall picture provided through this communications audit is of a highly segmented sub-region with no dominant communications channel. Most stakeholders use electronic or face to face communication channels to speak to internal and external audiences. The lack of a strong sub-regional media means that the identify of West London remains vague in the view of many stakeholders, so they focus on particular areas such as Ealing, Hounslow or Uxbridge rather than whole boroughs, or the wider area.

Building the profile and role of the West London Partnership will require clarity of organisational purpose, the ability to offer expert comment in defined areas and the consistent and professional use of electronic and face to face communication channels. This could be achieved through regular, and carefully edited briefings providing news on targeted subjects and a stakeholder engagement programme planned over the course of a year, bringing together politicians, community leaders and key businesses.

The abundance of existing communication channels, particularly the borough magazines, internal business publications and community websites, means that the Partnership should position itself as a supplier, or 'wholesaler' of information rather than creating its own publications. It should work to position itself on the websites, in the publications and as part of the presentations made by stakeholders. This recommendation is based on the evidence we have gathered, showing a proliferation of channels, but no coherent West London identity. So, the West London Partnership should position itself within existing channels where it will be seen as part of the established organisation, rather than wasting resources on an attempt to build a separate profile around an ill-defined idea of West London. A Google check of West London will define it as anywhere from Bayswater to Richmond, and it will take significant time, a co-ordinated effort and resources to change this perception.

Delivering this approach will require a well maintained and developed stakeholder database and a team of policy experts rather than a large public relations operation. The website, paper and electronic briefings, speeches and seminars are the key tools for developing and maintaining the profile of the WLP, and are shown to be the tools favoured by stakeholders in the survey of effective ways of reaching the public. Indeed, driving people towards the website would maintain its high accessibility for people searching for information about West London, which in turn reinforces the brand.

The research demonstrated low, but significant levels of penetration for local newspapers but relatively high viewership of regional TV channels. The difficulty

with utilising these channels is twofold. First, local papers are unlikely to be interested in the work of a strategic body such as the WLP unless it is offering relevant new information (such as survey data on households) or has made a mistake. Second, relationships will have to be built and maintained over a long period to deliver dividends in terms of awareness and understanding of the WLP.

A more cost-effective approach would be to supply those with regular access to media channels, such as council leaders and Assembly members with the material to promote the case for West London.

The main building block for building awareness of the work of the WLP should be through the communication departments of local authorities. West London has a highly effective local government communications operation and the borough councils can offer opportunities in terms of events, publications and media work to showcase the WLP. The Partnership may wish to seek to negotiate with councils space in borough publications which are effective and credible sources of local information.

2.1 Recommended actions

- **The Partnership can build influence and standing by positioning itself as the expert on West London.** It can do so by becoming a reliable source for good-quality information on West London, becoming integral to promoting what goes on in West London, especially now the Olympics pose an additional challenge in drawing attention to West London.
- **The Partnership must seek to communicate clarity of purpose,** possibly focusing more strongly on the economic and business investment arguments that tie in with concerns expressed by GLA members over the Olympics and the perception of an 'East London bias'.
- **The Partnership should develop its online and face-to-face communications,** such as events and presentations and email updates, preferred by 72% of stakeholders.

The objectives identified by the report and the Partnership can be achieved through:

- **Regular paper and electronic briefings, speeches and seminars** on targeted subjects
- **Promotion of the Partnership's visual identity** its brand and the reasons why organisations should come together, how this will benefit them and West London.
- **A stakeholder engagement programme** planned over the course of a year, bringing together politicians, community leaders and key businesses.
- A well maintained and developed **stakeholder database** with a reference group of policy experts.
- Supplying those with regular access to media channels, such as council leaders and Assembly members with **the material and information to promote the case for West London.**
- Obtaining the agreement of the communication departments of **local authorities to publicise the work of the WLP**, including space in borough publications.
- **Measuring impact and awareness** through incorporating questions on West London Issues in future council surveys and using GLA 2005 perceptions survey to inform action going forward. Evaluate progress one year on.