



A report for:

South Derbyshire District Council

Corporate Printing Requirements & Graphic Design Review

iMPOWER Consulting Ltd
10th October 2007





Background

Further to the Finance & Management Committee report of the 26th July 2007 relating to the corporate printing requirement review, a period of consultation from the 14th of August to the 14th of September has taken place.

During the consultation process, some of the consultees requested that the council's graphic design requirements be included in this review rather than be investigated at a later date. Those consulted have felt that if the work done corporately on graphic design is included in this review there might be an impact on the proposed changes to the organisation and staffing levels of the print room.

According to *Wikipedia*, graphic design: "is the process of communicating visually using text and images to present information. Graphic design practice embraces a range of cognitive skills, aesthetics and crafts, including typography, visual arts and page layout". For the purpose of this report we are considering those members of staff in South Derbyshire with particular expertise and specialism in this field, which iMPOWER believes goes beyond competence in Microsoft Office applications.

The council's graphic design activities are currently provided in three ways:

1. By a graphic designer (grade 6) located in planning;
2. The print room via the print room supervisor (grade 6) or the print room assistant (grade 4); and
3. Some departments also use external graphic designers.

Further investigation was desired to help determine the corporate graphic design requirements and the way forward.

Methodology

As with the previous investigation, interviews with the current post holders - Caroline Payne (and her line manager Ian Bowen), Ken Storey, Sue Schofield and Mike Hale - and appropriate stakeholders were necessary to determine the way forward.

The interviews sought to answer the following questions:

- What proportion of the post holders' time is spent on graphic design?
- Who uses the service?
- What work is done? How complex is the work?
- What happens if work is too complex? Are external design companies ever used?
- What knowledge / skills / qualifications are needed to do the work?
- How do the print room and graphic designer interact with each other?
- How do the print room and graphic designer interact with public relations and the web manager?
- How is graphic design charged for?





In addition to the above interviews the following tasks were carried out:

Carole Chapman	Public relations officer	Short discussion to consider links with public relations
Sheila Dixon	Web editor	Short discussion to consider links with website
David Clamp	Head of HR	Short discussion to consider HR issues
Gill Hague	Head of planning services	Short discussion to consider context in planning
Nigel Glossop	Head of IT and customer services	Short discussion to consider overall objectives of the review

An audit of printing request forms used to invoice work done by the print room was also performed.

Findings

1. The print room employees collectively spend less than 0.25 FTE on graphic design

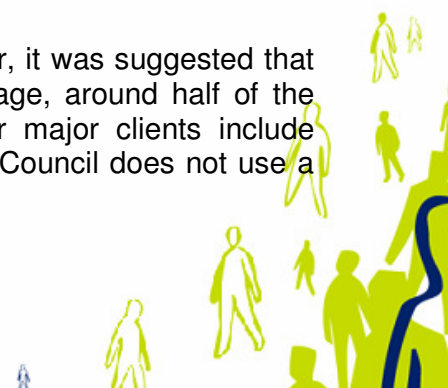
In interviews the print room supervisor suggested that up to half of that role's time is currently spent working on graphic design, with the print room assistant's graphic design activities accounting for just under a third of that role.

However, a month's sample of the printing request forms that detail the work done and amounts charged show that 40 hours were charged as 'desk top publishing'. Not all of this could be considered to be graphic design; a significant proportion of this time was spent on the creation of corporate stationery and on *ad hoc* work on documents that ordinarily might have been done by support services or the departments themselves.

Our analysis also suggests that much of the non-printing work undertaken by the print room team is in response to additional supply rather than actual demand – staff are using these services because they are being offered rather than because they are needed.

2. The graphic designer role currently involves 50% of activity being spent on planning-specific graphic design

In interviews with the graphic designer and her line manager, it was suggested that the work fluctuates over the course of a year but on average, around half of the graphic designer's time is spent on planning work. Other major clients include community & leisure and various partnership activities. The Council does not use a





time recording system and so these proportions were not verified but the discussions around type and volume of work seem to suggest that they are accurate. Some validation of this figure is provided by the financial recharge for the graphic designer which shows that 50% was allocated to planning and the remaining 50% split between various departments across the rest of the Council.

3. The graphic designer and print room staff currently work independently

From interviews with all key stakeholders it appears that there is very limited communication, co-ordination or sharing of work load / best practice for graphic design work. The only interaction appears to be when the graphic designer needs work printing.

4. The qualifications and experience of those working on graphic design varies

The graphic designer is qualified to HND level, has significant work experience in graphic design and was specifically appointed as the corporate graphic designer.

The graphic design role of print room staff has gradually evolved and they have mainly learned on the job alongside some informal training. The print room supervisor has a City & Guilds qualification in Quark Express, although this package is not currently used by the Council.

Adobe applications (Illustrator, Photoshop and PageMaker) are used by the graphic designer and the print room. The graphic designer also uses MapInfo Professional, the Council's GIS system.

5. The council does not account for graphic design work consistently

The graphic designer's staff cost is recharged based on end of year estimates. The print room charge for each job on an hourly basis.

6. There is no council-wide protocol for obtaining graphic design services

There is no agreed protocol with service areas approaching either the graphic designer or print room based on tradition or personal preference. Neither the graphic designer nor the print room refer work to external design agencies but they are used by other council departments without consulting either party. This will clearly have a corresponding impact on the cost and quality of the work.





Options and recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered we would recommend that the graphic designer is not included in the consultation (option 1b) and that the role is re-located to be with public relations in legal and democratic services (option 2b). We would also recommend that all the suggestions listed in decision 3 are implemented.

Decision 1 - Should the graphic designer be included in the consultation?

1a) Yes - the graphic designer should be included in the consultation because:

- The print room currently do some graphic design work
- The print room supervisor could apply for a job at the Council without having to move to a lower grade.
- Can be seen that all aspects of graphic design and printing have been considered at one time

The implications of this decision would be:

- Accounting for the substantial differences in roles and responsibilities of the graphic designer and print room supervisor
- Accounting for the significant differences in qualification and experience levels of the graphic designer and print room supervisor

1b) No - the graphic designer should not be included in the consultation because:

- The graphic designer's role appears to be significantly different to those of the print room staff.
- The graphic designer role is full time whereas the print room staff collectively perform between around 0.13 and 0.25 FTE of graphic design work
- The bulk of the graphic design work that the print room undertakes consists of small and simple tasks.

The implications of this decision would be:

- Current confused responsibilities for graphic design work in the Council poses a management issue in seeking to untangle the current evolved situation



**Decision 2 - Where should the Council's graphic design function be situated?**

2a) In planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The corporate graphic design function could continue to be located in planning
Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of disruptionAround 50% of the graphic designer's work is currently for planning and this involves using the GIS system
Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Graphic design is a corporate function and so it seems illogical to locate it within one particular service unit

2b) In legal & democratic with public relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The corporate graphic design function could be located with the public relations function
Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Graphic design and public relations are both concerned with the Council's public image and enabling clear communication with local peopleShould enable closer collaboration
Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Requires changes to management structures

2c) With printing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The corporate graphic design function could be located with the printing function
Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Could enable a smooth transition from design to print
Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Printing function will mostly be focusing on bulk photocopying - not related to the bulk of graphic design workRequires changes to management structures





Decision 3 - What else can be done to improve the way the graphic design service is used across the Council?

Whatever is decided with regards to the options above, it is clear that the centralisation of graphic design services will be more efficient for South Derbyshire. A protocol should be put in place to stipulate that:

- All requests for graphic design work should be given to the corporate graphic designer
- All requests for assistance with Microsoft Office document formatting should be given to support services
- External design agencies should only be used when the graphic designer approves for capacity or capability reasons
- Measures to reduce demand for graphic design (internal documents only going to graphic design in exceptional circumstances, moving print publications to the intranet / internet only)

