INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Executive summary
1. The purpose of this paper is to take stock of the internal communications function now that it is been in place for over a year; review the actions on the Delivery Plan; and to agree the priorities for 2019/20. It also seeks LG’s support in delivering the agreed next steps.

2. The Internal Communications Review Report recommendations are available on Sharepoint. As a reminder, our internal communications objectives are to:
   • Improve understanding of what we are all here to achieve
   • Improve collaboration
   • Improve a sense of belonging
   • Reinforce our values

Issues and Options
2018/19
3. Since LG signed off the Internal Communications Review Report, the following has been achieved:
   • There is a wider recognition of the importance of internal communications throughout the staff group with colleagues from around the organisation approaching the Internal Communications Manager for advice on a regular basis.
   • The Internal Communications Manager has become involved in a range of projects and programmes including the Culture of Respect work, the Web and Online Programme and the Security Maturity Programme.
   • We have held a successful staff day. This has demonstrated that there is an appetite for staff to feel more involved and to feel part of a wider team. It has also demonstrated that staff are interested in topics which they might not ordinarily have ready access to such as digital and security. It’s also shown the benefit of consulting with staff.
   • Improvements have been made to the Corporate Bulletin in terms of including stories of wider interest and recognising staff achievements.
   • Focus on the tone of our internal communications and ensuring that, where appropriate we adopt an informal but professional tone.
   • EH99 is now being produced collaboratively with a group of staff volunteers sourcing and writing stories.
• The Internal Communications Manager has been building up a network of staff contacts to sound out ideas and take views from.

4. In the same time, the following has changed in the organisation.
• The introduction and embedding of a number of staff networks, including the diversity networks and the new Grade 6 network.
• We have introduced new values.
• Work has been undertaken to develop and improve planning and reporting in the organisation, with a focus on greater collaboration.
• Corporate Governance review which will provide more opportunities for non-LG members to contribute to boards.
• We are undertaking scoping and research with a view to replacing our intranet.
• Increased workloads in a number of areas in response to Brexit and other priorities.

5. There are three outstanding internal communications actions on this year’s Delivery Plan. The first two are related to providing opportunities for staff to feedback their views. During the review, meaningful consultation from managers was something that many staff felt was missing from internal communications. The proposed recommendations related to this were a) the reintroduction of LG drop-ins and the creation of LG feedback meetings and b) investigate whether there was a case for supporting a new staff forum.

6. The introduction of a series of networks over the past 18 months has arguably provided additional opportunities for staff to have their voices heard and their issues aired. The new G6 network appears to be bedding in well but it is too early to say what benefits this may bring both to Office Heads and the wider staff group in terms of improved engagement with senior managers. In light of these points, and bearing in mind capacity within the organisation, **LG is invited to discuss whether the remainder of 2018/19 is the right time to introduce these actions.**

7. The third remaining recommendation for the year is for Group Heads to review internal communications in their areas. It is proposed that work on this begins in January with a view to reporting to LG by the end of April. Group Heads will be expected to tailor the approach to suit their own needs and business areas. The Internal Communications Manager will meet with Group Heads to provide support and advice on how they might go about this and to discuss any areas that should be covered to enable meaningful feedback to LG. The review is intended to be “light-touch” and would look to identify areas of good practice and explore key themes. Themes might include: knowledge of LG discussions; the quality of local induction; any emerging benefits from the G6 network; the quantity and quality of face-to-face time with managers and Office Heads; and any support Office Heads would appreciate to support them with staff communications. It is likely that useful feedback on corporate
communications will arise via this process too. **LG is asked to note that the Internal Communications Manager will be in touch with Group Heads to begin this work.**

### 2019/20

8. It is proposed that the Internal Communications Manager prioritises the following during the next reporting year: co-ordination of internal communications; taking an engagement-focussed approach to internal communications; and leading on the intranet development work.

9. With a view to improving the standard of internal communications across the organisation, it may be worth considering whether training or development opportunities for staff would be useful. This could cover the importance of effective communications, expectations on managers and personal responsibility. This is something that could be revisited later in the next reporting year once other work has bedded in and it could be informed by the review of internal communications within Groups.

10. The Internal Communications Manager job description is attached at Annex A for information.

#### A Co-ordinated Approach

11. The first priority will be to produce, monitor and regularly update a corporate internal communications calendar. This will be a key document for keeping track of both regular planned communications and emerging project and programme communications. It is proposed that the Internal Communications Manager and the Media Relations Office present a forward look of planned significant internal and external communications to Leadership Group meetings on a monthly basis. This will begin prior to the new reporting year with the first update on Monday 28 January.

12. The Delivery Plan for 2019/20 features a number of objectives which will require to build in internal communications. Given the volume and breadth of these topics, a co-ordinated approach is essential. It is suggested that the Internal Communications Manager is involved or continues to be involved in the following:

- Security Maturity Programme (already on Programme Board)
- 20th Anniversary Programme (already on Steering Group)
- Implement new strategic planning and budgeting processes
- Deliver our Web and Online Programme (already on Programme Board and Product Owner for the intranet theme)
- Diversity and Inclusion Delivery Plan
- Values Workstream
- Culture of Respect
- Recruitment Process Review (already on working group)

13. The Internal Communications Manager is a singleton post and it is proposed that the main support to projects is consultancy and advice on project communications and developing new communication and engagement ideas. Internal communications within teams and projects remains the responsibility of staff and
managers. It is important, however, to liaise with the Internal Communications Manager on any new significant communications as early as possible.

14. Line managers and Office Heads are key to effective internal communications. To date there has been no corporate, co-ordinated attempt to ensure that managers are supported in fulfilling this important role. A corporate calendar could also be used to help produce a regular resource for Office Heads to help them update their staff on corporate information in an engaging manner.

15. LG is asked to discuss the corporate calendar and the regular LG updates. Also to discuss whether information packs for Office Heads packs might be helpful.

**Engagement-Focussed Internal Communications**

16. The volume of positive feedback from the staff day has demonstrated both that there is a place for engagement activities for SPS staff and that staff are interested in being informed on a variety of corporate initiatives.

17. There are various pieces of evidence in academic studies of internal communications that people-focussed, face-to-face communications are the most effective. Both the internal communications review and the work undertaken on office planning have provided anecdotal evidence that this is also the case in our own organisation.

18. While it clearly isn’t practical for all corporate communications to happen face-to-face, the Internal Communications Manager would like to explore the benefits of an engagement-focussed internal communications approach where this is appropriate. An engagement approach provides opportunities to explore or demonstrate the benefits of a project for the organisation and for staff. It can reinforce our values and achieve buy-in for projects by making them meaningful to staff. This sort of approach can take many forms and can be tailored to suit the project. Examples could include holding themed days or weeks around certain topics; providing a range of opportunities for staff to discuss new ideas with colleagues to stimulate creative thinking and feedback; involving networks at different stages of a project; providing short term shadowing opportunities within projects with a reciprocal benefit to the project of hearing the views of someone not directly involved; and holding digital consultations similar to that used for the staff day. Further ideas can be worked up with key staff from around the organisation who have experience of this sort of engagement.

19. It is acknowledged that many projects and workstreams are likely to assign communications and engagement as part of their planning. This should continue to be good practice. What is proposed is a more engagement-focussed approach to internal communications with a few key projects. In some circumstances it may be that the Internal Communications Manager is providing that input wholly and on others it may be in collaboration with colleagues who are responsible for project communications.

20. There are a number of items on the Delivery Plan which would particularly benefit from incorporating an engagement-focussed approach. It is suggested that...
these include the Values workstream, Security Maturity Programme and the Web and Online Programme.

21. In terms of written communications, it is proposed that those preparing internal communications are mindful of the appropriate tone. Unless the subject matter is grave, it is suggested that an engaging, informal but professional tone is adopted. The Internal Communications Manager will also look at the possibility of branding corporate messages from the Chief Executive’s Office with a recognisable template.

22. **LG is invited to discuss and agree to the Internal Communications Manager trialling an engagement-focussed internal communications approach, where this is appropriate.**

**Intranet**

23. Scoping and discovery work on replacing the intranet is currently underway. A report with recommendations will be delivered to the Web and Online Programme Board at the end of March. What is decided there will inform the work required in 2019/20. The project provides a number of potential opportunities to enhance internal communications and engagement.

**Resource Implications**

24. The Internal Communications Manager role is a singleton post. Given the potential volume of work, it will be important to prioritise workloads.

25. The focus for the post will be on driving forward the report recommendations; providing consultancy and advice on project communications; and developing ideas for innovative engagement on workstreams and projects where appropriate. The post is Product Owner for the intranet theme of the Web and Online Programme and this project will be a key element in laying the ground work for improved internal communications going forward. The job description at Annex A clarifies other areas of work the post undertakes.

**Dependencies**

26. Successful implementation of the proposed next steps is dependent upon support from LG members and effective working relationships between the Internal Communications Manager and staff working on key projects and programmes around the organisation. Successful internal communications and staff engagement are highly dependent on line managers and Office Heads fulfilling their communication roles. These are the key influencers in any organisation. LG support in fostering buy-in for the importance of this line manager’s communication responsibilities would be welcomed.

27. An effective working relationship with the Media Relations Office is important for refining those communications which will be of interest to the media. If a communication is internal it should be written for our staff and/or other internal stakeholders and signed off by the relevant Group Head.

**Governance issues**

28. Internal Communications is an essential element of good governance.
Publication Scheme
29. This paper may be published in line with the SPCB’s publication scheme.

Communications
30. The key stakeholders are SPS staff, Office Heads and Leadership Group.

Next steps
31. The next steps are to:

- Prepare a forward look for the LG meeting on 28 January;
- Develop a corporate communications calendar which will be shared with LG and used to inform the forward look at future meetings; and
- Support LG in reviewing internal communications in their groups.

Decision
32. LG is asked to:

- Decide whether to proceed with initiating LG drop-in sessions and LG staff meetings during the remainder of 2018/19, or to revisit later in the year.
- Decide whether to proceed with work to scope a remit for a new staff forum or to revisit later in the year.
- Agree the proposed internal communications priorities for 2019/20
- Agree trialling an engagement-focussed approach for specific programmes in 2019/20
- Note that the Internal Communications Manager will be in touch to begin work for the agreed review of Group internal communications. A report on the review is due with LG by the end of April 2019.
- Note the job role for the Internal Communications Manager (Annex A)

Clerk/Chief Executive’s Office
January 2019
Internal Communications Manager Job Description

- In conjunction with the Chief Executive and Leadership Group to put in place the recommendations for the agreed internal communications strategy.

- Ensure organisational initiatives are successfully communicated to staff and other building users. This will involve liaising with policy lead and inputting into the draft notices where appropriate.

- Ensure that in communicating messages they are consistent in format across all offices within the organisation and, where appropriate, they are consistent with external messages.

- Working alongside project teams to ensure that a communication plan is developed for each Delivery Plan project. Ensure the plan is regularly updated and messages are issued according to the agreed plan.

- Plan, edit and, as necessary, contribute to the Corporate Bulletin (weekly), EH99 (quarterly) and other internal communication mediums.

- Working alongside other colleagues to consider and put forward proposals on using digital technology for effective internal communications.

- Be a member of the Incident Management Communications Team working on internal communications in response to crisis situations impacting on the Parliament.