

# PRWeek

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Public Affairs Supplement



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Essex and Westminster make thousands in fees as public sector budgets slashed

## Top councils raise cash by selling comms expertise

By Matt Cartmell

Nineteen public bodies have bought comms services from two councils in the past year, according to records obtained by PRWeek.

Essex County Council made more than £50,000 from selling comms services in the past 12 months. Westminster is believed to have made significantly more but the council failed to provide a figure when approached by PRWeek.

The trend is expected to grow as Northamptonshire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council finalise plans to sell comms services to other public bodies such as other councils, primary care trusts and police forces (see page 3).

A Freedom of Information request revealed that Essex Communications, the consultancy formed by Essex County Council, made £51,131.50 in fees in the 2009/10 financial year.

Essex's work included pub-

PHOTO: GUY LAWRENCE



**Comms for sale** Essex Council made £50,000 selling services

lic affairs support to Wandsworth Council and Thames Gateway South Essex.

The council also provided a 'comprehensive review of the comms structure and recommendations on future comms work' to Suffolk County Council.

Meanwhile, Westminster City Council's company, Westco, is revealed to have worked for 15 clients in 2009/10,

including the Metropolitan Police Authority, ten councils and Capita Business Services.

Westminster did not disclose how much money it made from the clients, claiming it would be a 'prejudice to commercial interest'.

Band & Brown Communications head of public sector Simon Francis said: 'It's about sharing best practice in the

### Selected clients

#### Essex

- ◆ Wandsworth Council
- ◆ Thames Gateway South Essex
- ◆ Suffolk County Council
- ◆ Brentwood Borough Council
- ◆ Rural Community Council Essex

#### Westminster

- ◆ Cannock Chase District Council
- ◆ Eastleigh Borough Council
- ◆ Metropolitan Police Authority
- ◆ NHS Harrow

public sector, and that should be encouraged. It's difficult for a national agency to go in and understand all those local issues as a council would.'

Grayling divisional director Justin McKeown added: 'The need for communications does not go away in a recession. Sometimes that will be by using in-house staff, or sometimes it will be outsourced.'



Playboy founder Hugh Hefner

### Mischief wins Playboy brief

Mischief PR is to promote plans for a new Playboy club in London - 30 years after the previous celebrity-frequented venue shut down.

The original club in Park Lane attracted stars such as Sean Connery, Michael Caine, Joan Collins, George Best, Roger Moore, Jack Nicholson and Muhammad Ali.

Now, casino giant London Clubs International has called in Mischief as it plans to convert the Rendezvous club, in Old Park Lane, into a Playboy franchise. The new club is due to open in 2011.

Feminist writers have criticised the reopening, but Mischief MD Mitchell Kaye said: 'It's an iconic venue - and very much a case of the legend returning.' He added: 'We will be targeting a very exclusive membership.'

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### Job of the week

Comms and policy officer, Cambridgeshire County Council, £24,646-£26,276. See page 38 or go to... [prweekjobs.co.uk](http://prweekjobs.co.uk)

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**ACTIONAID** was awarded the prize for the world's most innovative fundraising campaign at the Global Fundraising Awards held in the Netherlands last week. The development charity picked up the award for its Yorkshire Means the World campaign, which was launched in October 2009 when the UK was still in recession.

**AUDIENCE COMMUNICATIONS**, part of the M&C Saatchi Group of companies, has hired **Rosie Strachan** as account director. She was formerly an associate director at Fishburn Hedges.

**TRUE VOLUNTEER FOUNDATION** has called on charities to 'step up and identify' how the impact of the public spending cuts can be minimised. In a statement, TVF partnerships team member **Kim Momtaz** said: 'There is no doubt there are thousands of charities delivering vital services. Some of these services will cease to exist without national or local government funding.'

For breaking voluntary sector news, check [prweek.com/uk/voluntary](http://prweek.com/uk/voluntary)

of media and images Sarah Gillam as head of comms, and made two other hires.

Melanie Hook joins as comms resources manager from the Royal College of Surgeons, while Victoria Hassett joins as comms officer (media) from Sam Forest PR.

The three appointments have been made to help the charity increase the number of horses it helps around the world, to two million a year by 2016.

Gillam, who previously worked as press manager at Farm-Africa, said: 'We will be looking at how we can maximise our visibility. I will be putting together a comms



**Treatment** The Brooke hopes to help tw

strategy by next March. We will need to raise money to meet the two million figure and raising awareness is part of that drive.'

The hires come as part of a move to integrate the comms and online teams. Previously, the online team was included in the fundraising unit.

The charity is aiming to launch a new website next

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## TAKING ACTION... Scottish Trades Union C

**Protesters** Scottish Trades Union Congress  
**Target** Westminster  
**Location** Edinburgh  
**Date** 23 October

### The lowdown

Twenty-thousand people protested in Edinburgh in a mass rally organised by the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Buses from across Scotland brought people to the city centre for a rally between East Market Street and Princes Street Gardens. The rally was part of the union's 'There Is Another Way' campaign. The event was attended by Holyrood politicians including Justice Secretary Kenny McAskill and Scottish Labour leader Iain Gray, who said the large turnout



**Rally** Protesters gather in Edinb

demonstrated the Scottish j  
opposition to the cuts.

### Why the protest?

Before the march, STUC gen  
secretary Grahame Smith sa