

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Personnel Policy**RESIDENTS' NEWSLETTER****1. Purpose of Report**

To outline potential options for producing the Council's residents' newsletter in the future.

2. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to CONSIDER the options and RESOLVE accordingly.

3. Detail

The Council has produced a bi-annual newsletter, Broxtowe Matters, for many years as a way to inform residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the Borough about the work of the Council and its partners. The last review of this approach was completed in 2017.

Each edition is designed and printed externally and delivered to every household and business in the Borough by Royal Mail in the summer and winter. Approximately £6,000 of advertising revenue is generated each year through an external provider which is used to offset the production of the newsletter.

Costs for the production and delivery of the newsletter continue to rise, despite small savings being achieved through procurement. The cost of producing both editions in 2022 was £23,138, compared to £18,500 in 2017.

The Council continues to use a multi-channel approach for its communications and engagement, including more traditional methods of communications like print media. However, more and more is being done online and take up of online channels continues to grow.

Whilst it is difficult to measure the take up of printed publications, the Email Me Service, for example, now has 27,000 subscribers across nine regular email bulletins. In 2021/22, recipients of these bulletins reached a total of 1,698,288 across the multiple topics. The budget consultation has also seen an increase in respondents through the use of this channel from less than 100 to over 1,200 for the most recent consultation, and a joint digital project across all Nottinghamshire Council's communications teams, WestCo and Council Advertising Network (CAN) to increase vaccination uptake won 'Gold' at the Public Service Communications Awards 2021, demonstrating the value of and recognition for digital media approaches.

Many other Councils are reconsidering how they produce a residents' newsletter in terms of being able to assess readership, address rapidly increasing expenditure during the current cost of living crisis and support their climate change commitments. Members may be minded, therefore, to consider the Council's own approach.

The agreed approach will help inform how other communications activities could be delivered, where online facilities are already well established and utilised, such as bin calendars.

A detailed analysis of options is provided in the appendix 1. Benchmarking of local authorities is provided in appendix 2 and appendix 3 contains the Equality Impact Assessment.

4. Financial Implications

The comments from the Head of Finance Services were as follows:

The cost of producing and distributing Broxtowe Matters in 2022 has increased to £23,138, which is 20% higher than in 2017. The current annual budget is £20,000 and is proposed to rise to £24,000 in 2023/24. Any budget savings to be generated through reduced costs and/or increased income would be welcomed.

5. Legal Implications

The comments from the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal Services were as follows:

Section 6 (4) of the Local Government Act 1986 (the 'Act'), publicity is defined as 'any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or a section of the public'. The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (the 'Publicity Code') is issued under the powers conferred by the Act that requires Local Authorities to have regards to the Publicity Code in coming to any decision on publicity. The Code has seven main principles that should be adhered to. The relevant ones here are, Lawfulness - local authorities should ensure that publicity complies with all applicable statutory provisions paid for advertising must comply with the Advertising Standards Authority's Advertising Code. Cost effectiveness, local authorities should be able to confirm that consideration has been given to the value for money that is being achieved and, equality and diversity. Local authorities should consider how any publicity they issue can contribute to the promotion of any duties applicable to them in relation to the elimination of discrimination, the advancement of equality and the fostering of good relations.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

As this is a change to policy / a new policy an equality impact assessment is included in the appendix to this report.

7. Background Papers

Nil

Newsletter Options Appraisal

Notes

- Royal Mail distribution is booked by postcode sector. This means that there is some overlap into postcode areas outside of Broxtowe and therefore the total number printed is 55,000 (increased from 52,000).
- Comments from the Council's existing advertising supplier have suggested that the major unique selling point of advertising in Council publications is their guaranteed distribution to large numbers of people. They do not feel they would be able to offer the same advertising rates or generate commitment from advertisers if the distribution was reduced.
- According to the OfCom Online Nation 2021 Report, 94% of UK homes have internet access and 80% of UK adults use it. In Broxtowe, 100% of homes are able to receive a decent standard of broadband.

Three options are provided in the table below.

Option	Costs per year (Estimated on 2022 costs and price increases)	Advertising revenue	Potential savings	Comments
Option 1 Continue with existing arrangements to produce and distribute a printed copy newsletter to every property in the Borough.	Design (in house) £1,200 Print (55,000 copies) £14,000 Distribution £9,800 TOTAL £25,000	£6,303.00	N/A	Between production of the 2022 summer and winter edition, costs increased by £2,591.86 so it is anticipated that further significant cost rises will be seen during 2023. This is predominantly due to the rapidly rising cost of paper and supply chain issues as a result of the conflict in the Ukraine. An increased number of properties in the Borough has also increased the distribution volume for the post code sectors from 52,000 to 55,000, which has further impacted on cost. It is not possible to determine readership levels, given the nature of this type of publication.

Option	Costs per year (Estimated on 2022 costs and price increases)	Advertising revenue	Potential savings	Comments
<p>Option 2 Continue to produce a printed newsletter but encourage more people to read it online and reduce distribution to 5,000 copies. These would be available on request, made available to community groups and provided in public buildings e.g. libraries, community centres etc.</p>	<p>Design £1,200</p> <p>Print £2,000</p> <p>Distribution £1,000</p> <p>Retained budget for communicating and engaging with harder to reach groups £2,000</p> <p>TOTAL £6,600</p>	<p>Unlikely to be viable if distribution reduced</p>	<p>£18,800</p>	<p>An accessible PDF of the newsletter would be available on the website with the link shared through the Email Me Service and other channels. This will enable the Council to gather more accurate data on readership. Direct engagement will also be undertaken with stakeholders and community groups to help disseminate the information.</p> <p>In conjunction with this, there will be increased promotion of the Email Me Service as the main route to receive Council news and updates, including the information that would normally be presented in the newsletter.</p> <p>A smaller quantity of printed copies will be produced and made available to those who are not online through direct requests, community groups and public buildings.</p> <p>It is proposed to retain some of the budget savings to support alternative communication and engagement work with harder to reach groups who are not online. This will enable more targeted work to take place. The 2021 census identified that there is more than 600 residents who do not speak English.</p>
<p>Option 3 Adopt a digital approach to the newsletter, encouraging</p>	<p>Retained budget for communicating and engaging with harder to reach groups £5,000</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>£20,000</p>	<p>The news included in the printed publication would instead be included in our weekly latest news bulletins. This will enable residents to receive much more up to date news and will enable the Council to gather more accurate data on reach.</p>

Option	Costs per year (Estimated on 2022 costs and price increases)	Advertising revenue	Potential savings	Comments
residents to sign up to our weekly email bulletins rather than producing a printed newsletter.				<p>In conjunction with this, there will be increased promotion of the Email Me Service as the main route to receive Council news and updates.</p> <p>The time previously used to produce the newsletter will be reallocated to working with stakeholders, for example partners and community groups, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilise the Council's email bulletins to promote their content and reach residents • share Council content through their channels • further increase Email Me sign ups <p>As in option 2, it is proposed to retain some of the budget savings to support alternative communication and engagement work with harder to reach groups who are not online. This would enable more targeted work to take place. An additional £3,000 is proposed in this option to address the reduction in printed material.</p>

APPENDIX 2

Benchmarking

In a survey of local government communications teams, 69 responses were received.

- 39 Councils continue to deliver a printed newsletter to every property in their area.
- 3 Councils produce a digital newsletter but make a small number of printed copies available in public spaces or on request.
- 19 Councils produce a digital only newsletter.
- 6 Councils no longer produce a newsletter.
- 2 Councils continue to deliver a printed newsletter to every property in their area but are looking to reduce the number of publications.

Insight: The data demonstrates that 43% of the local authorities who responded have already adjusted their approach to newsletter production, with over 30% choosing to go digital only.

In a survey of the other Nottinghamshire Councils:

- 2 Councils continue to deliver a printed newsletter to every property in their area and have no plans to change (Mansfield, Rushcliffe).
- 3 Councils continue to deliver a printed newsletter to every property in their area but are looking to reduce the number of publications (Ashfield, Gedling, Nottinghamshire County).
- 1 Council produces a digitally designed newsletter but makes a small number of printed copies available in public spaces and on request (Nottingham City).
- 1 Council produces a monthly e-newsletter in lieu of a printed publication but produces ad hoc printed publications for important issues e.g. cost of living (Newark and Sherwood).
- 1 Council delivers a printed newsletter to housing tenants only (Bassetlaw).

Insight: There are a variety of methods used in Nottinghamshire in relation to newsletter production. Only two are not considering reviewing their approach.

APPENDIX 3

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

Directorate:	Communications, Cultural and Civic Services	Lead officer responsible for EIA	Communications, Cultural and Civic Services Manager
Name of the policy or function to be assessed:	Residents' newsletter		
Names of the officers undertaking the assessment:	Sarah Tidy		
Is this a new or an existing policy or function?	Existing		
<p>1. What are the aims and objectives of the policy or function? To inform and engage local residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders about Council and other local matters.</p>			
<p>2. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy or function? Residents and other stakeholders are more informed about Council matters and other local services. Residents engage with initiatives and services which can result in behaviour change where appropriate.</p>			
<p>3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy or function? All residents in Broxtowe.</p>			
<p>4. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy or function? Residents, businesses, community groups, employees, Members</p>			
<p>5. What baseline quantitative data do you have about the policy or function relating to the different equality strands? The printed format of Broxtowe Matters makes it very difficult to gather any data on readership. Options 2 and 3 of the report would enable more data to be gathered to baseline readership and make improvements for specific groups.</p>			
<p>6. What baseline qualitative data do you have about the policy or function relating to the different equality strands? The printed format of Broxtowe Matters makes it very difficult to gather any data on readership. Options 2 and 3 of the report would enable more data to be gathered to baseline readership and make improvements for specific groups.</p>			
<p>7. What has stakeholder consultation, if carried out, revealed about the nature of the impact? The last resident survey was conducted in 2017 and received less than 30 responses (0.02% of the population).</p>			
<p>8. From the evidence available does the policy or function affect or have the potential to affect different equality groups in different ways? In assessing whether the policy or function adversely affects any particular group or presents an opportunity for promoting equality, consider the questions below in relation to each equality group:</p>			

Directorate:	Communications, Cultural and Civic Services	Lead officer responsible for EIA	Communications, Cultural and Civic Services Manager
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the policy or function target or exclude a specific equality group or community? Does it affect some equality groups or communities differently? If yes, can this be justified?</p> <p>Options 2 and 3 of the report propose measures to minimise the impact on groups who may be harder to reach or not online. They would help redirect resources to a more targeted approach to engaging these groups.</p>			
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the policy or function likely to be equally accessed by all equality groups or communities? If no, can this be justified?</p> <p>Options 2 and 3 of the report propose measures to minimise the impact on groups who may be harder to reach or not online. They would help redirect resources to a more targeted approach to engaging these groups.</p>			
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Are there barriers that might make access difficult or stop different equality groups or communities accessing the policy or function?</p> <p>Online access is the main barrier but the measures proposed in Options 2 and 3 to minimise this would enable a more targeted approach to engaging these groups.</p>			
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Could the policy or function promote or contribute to equality and good relations between different groups? If so, how?</p> <p>If Options 2 or 3 were approved, redirecting resources to more targeted work with stakeholders and equality groups would help support improved relations between groups.</p>			
<p><input type="checkbox"/> What further evidence is needed to understand the impact on equality?</p> <p>None</p>			

<p>9. On the basis of the analysis above what actions, if any, will you need to take in respect of each of the equality strands?</p>
<p>Age: Work with partners and community groups to support engagement with this group.</p>
<p>Disability: Work with partners and community groups to support engagement with this group.</p>
<p>Gender: Changes proposed are not likely to impact</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment: Changes proposed are not likely to impact</p>

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Changes proposed are not likely to impact

Pregnancy and Maternity: Changes proposed are not likely to impact

Race: Work with partners and community groups to support engagement with this group.

Religion and Belief: Changes proposed are not likely to impact

Sexual Orientation: Changes proposed are not likely to impact

Executive Director:

I am satisfied with the results of this EIA. I undertake to review and monitor progress against the actions proposed in response to this impact assessment.

Signature: Executive Director