

**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**

In February 2023, Cabinet considered three proposals for producing the Council's residents' newsletter moving forward. The approved proposal was to:

- Continue producing a printed newsletter but encourage more people to read it online via the Email Me service.
- Reduce distribution to 5,000 copies which would be available on request, made available to community groups and provided in public buildings e.g. libraries, community centres etc.
- Retain £2,000 of the budget savings to support alternative communication and engagement work with harder to reach groups who are not online.
- Produce a saving of £18,800.

Both editions of the newsletter for 2023/24 have now been completed under the new arrangements and the Council has not received adverse feedback about the reduction in printed distribution of the newsletter.

Local community groups and organisations from across the Borough have been contacted but were only willing to take 1,500 copies so for the November 2023 edition, the print run was reduced to 2,000 to accommodate these requests, as well as being displayed in the Council's own public areas. No requests from individual resident have been made for a copy of the publication.

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, has resulted in nearly 3,000 new subscribers since the new approach was adopted, to a total of 28,950 (excluding internal subscribers).

Retained budget savings have been used to support three engagement projects including:

- Refresh of and recruitment to the Disability Forum.
- New Council services leaflet to be given out at partner events and by Officers attending events in the community, detailing Council services and how residents can get involved in local life.

- A cost of living leaflet targeted at those who may be more vulnerable and do not have online access.

Further details about these projects and costs can be found in **APPENDIX 1**.

Following a review of the year, two options are detailed for consideration in **APPENDIX 2** for the production of the newsletter moving forward. Attached at **APPENDIX 3** is information from a benchmarking exercise in February 2023 of 69 other local authorities AND an Equality Impact Assessment at **APPENDIX 4**.

#### 4. Key Decisions

This report is identified as a key decision as defined under Regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and is a decision made or to be made in connection with the discharge of an Executive function which is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards or electoral divisions in the Council's area.

#### 5. Updates from Scrutiny

N/A

#### 6. Financial Implications

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

There are no additional financial implications to consider at this stage with any activity being contained within existing budgets. Further details about project costs can be found in the appendices to this report.

#### 7. Legal Implications

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

Under s 4 of the Local Government Act 1986 ("the Act") the Secretary of State is empowered to issue codes of recommended practice as regards local authority publicity, and local authorities must "have regard" to the provisions of the Publicity Code in coming to any decision on publicity. The Code at paragraph 28 imposes three prohibitions, firstly, the Council cannot publish anything that seeks to emulate commercial newspapers in style or content. Secondly, the Council cannot publish a "newsletter, newssheet or similar communication" more frequently than quarterly. Thirdly, if the Council does publish a (quarterly) newsletter, newssheet or similar communication, it must not "include material other than information for the public about the business, services and amenities of the council or other local service providers. The publication would seek to promote public services, provide relevant and useful information to residents about public services, and enable community organisations and group to highlight their work in supporting their communities.

Furthermore, Section 6 (4) of the Act, publicity is defined as ‘any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or a section of the public’. 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. 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.

8. Human Resources Implications

N/A

9. Union Comments

N/A

10. Climate Change Implications

The comments from the Waste and Climate Change Manager were as follows:

Option two, the digital approach to producing the Council’s newsletter is highly recommended due to its significant positive impact on reducing the Council’s carbon footprint and promoting sustainability.

11. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

As this is a change to policy / a new policy an equality impact assessment is included in **APPENDIX 4** to this report.

13. Background Papers

Nil

### **Communications and engagement projects 2023/24**

The following communications and engagement projects have been undertaken using the retained budget savings from the new approach to the Council's resident's newsletter.

#### **Disability Forum**

A refresh of the Disability Forum has taken place to move to a co-production model to collaborate with people with disabilities and the groups who support them. This has included new terms of reference and a recruitment campaign will be launched early in 2024 to including an engagement event.

Estimated cost: £750

#### **Council services leaflet**

Production of a leaflet outlining key Council services and local information, which will be given out to new residents, as well as at engagement events in the community.

Estimated cost: £250

#### **Cost of living leaflet**

Production of a leaflet to signpost to the different support available to people to help them manage the cost of living. The leaflet will be distributed in early 2024 to at least 2,000 people who the Council is able to identify as being more vulnerable and who may have less online access to receive information via digital means as part of the Council's wider cost of living work.

Estimated cost: £1,000

In addition, a number of other projects have supported the Council's ability to engage with more people in the Borough.

#### **Student ambassadors**

The Council has worked with the University of Nottingham to expand its Community Engagement Ambassador (CEA) scheme to Beeston for the new 2023/24 academic year. As part of the programme, 20 students have been recruited to support community cohesion initiatives in areas with large student populations, including areas in Beeston North and Beeston Central. The students work up to eight hours a week to help build more positive relationships in the community between all residents and are able to report issues back to the Council, as well as promoting Council projects to the student population and encouraging their participation.

#### **Public roadshows**

As part of its Let's Talk Broxtowe consultation, the Council also ran a series of informal public roadshows which were attended by 97 people. Feedback was positive from the residents who attended the events and appreciated an opportunity

to talk to Council Officers and Members face to face. It was also an opportunity to update them on progress on the Council's priorities and projects.

**Stakeholder mapping**

Work has continued to improve connections with local community groups and organisations through stakeholder mapping. As a result of the improved contacts mapped and connections made, participation in Council consultations during 2023/24 has increased, including a 1,393 budget consultation responses, compared to 1,210 in 2022/23 and 606 in 2021/22. Similarly, the Let's Talk Broxtowe consultation received 820 responses in 2023/24 compared to 527 in the previous survey in 2019/20.

**Newsletter Options Appraisal**

The table below details two options for the next steps in achieving the widest possible engagement with residents.

Option 1 is to keep the existing arrangements. Option 2 would utilise the financial and Officer resource of producing a newsletter into a wider range of targeted engagement activities.

Option	Costs per year (Estimated on 2023 costs and expected price increases)	Potential savings	Comments
<p><b>Option 1</b> Continue with existing arrangement to produce a resident's newsletter which is promoted online. Reduce distribute of printed copies to 2,000 based on take up during 2023/24.</p>	<p>Design £1,300</p> <p>Print £2,900</p> <p>Distribution £500</p> <p>Retained budget for communicating and engaging with harder to reach groups £2,000</p> <p>TOTAL £6,700</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>An accessible PDF of the newsletter is available on the website with the link shared through the Email Me Service and other channels. Direct engagement is also regularly undertaken with stakeholders and community groups to help disseminate the information.</p> <p>An increase 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, has resulted in 3,000 new subscribers in 2023 year and a total of 28,950.</p> <p>Printed copies are made available to those who are not online through direct requests, community groups and public buildings. Distribution will be reduced to 2,000 copies based on 2023/24 take up.</p> <p>Projects will be identified in conjunction with corporate priorities and service development to best utilise the £2,000 of retained</p>

Option	Costs per year (Estimated on 2023 costs and expected price increases)	Potential savings	Comments
			budget savings for targeted engagement work with hard to reach groups.
<p><b>Option 2</b> Adopt a digital approach, encouraging residents to sign up to our weekly email bulletins to get up to date news, rather than producing a newsletter.</p> <p>Utilise budget savings to deliver more face to face engagement events and targeted communications projects as outlined.</p>	<p>Weekly email newsletters are met within existing budgets.</p> <p>Retained budget for communicating and engaging with harder to reach groups £5,000</p> <p>TOTAL £5,000</p>	£1,700	<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> <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 and delivered targeted communications and engagement work.</p> <p>For 2024/25 it is proposed that this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A programme of face to face resident information events in locations across the Borough, similar to those organised as part of the Let's Talk Broxtowe consultation.</li> <li>• Continued work the Disability Forum as part of a coproduction approach.</li> <li>• Adapt and refine the coproduction approach used for the Disability Forum to work with other harder to reach groups.</li> <li>• Other projects identified in conjunction with the Council's priorities and business plans.</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX 3****Benchmarking**

A benchmarking exercise in February 2023 of 69 other local authorities showed that:

- 43% of the local authorities who responded had already adjusted their approach to newsletter production.
- 36% had chosen to go digital only or cease producing a newsletter.

A new benchmarking exercise took place at the end of 2023 and showed that:

- 57% of the local authorities who responded had now adjusted their approach to newsletter production.
- 55% has chosen to go digital only or cease producing a newsletter.

In a survey of the other Nottinghamshire Councils in December 2023:

- 0 Councils plan to continue delivering a printed newsletter to every property in the same way as they have previously.
- 1 Council has a hybrid model with two digital and one printed newsletters produced each year (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).
- 2 Council produce a digitally designed newsletter but makes a small number of printed copies available in public spaces and on request (Nottingham City and Mansfield).
- 1 Council produces a monthly e-newsletter in lieu of a printed publication but produces ad hoc printed publications for important issues as required. (Newark and Sherwood).
- 1 Council delivers a printed newsletter to housing tenants only (Bassetlaw).

## APPENDIX 4

## 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:	Communications, Cultural and Civic Services Manager		
Is this a new or an existing policy or function?	Existing		
<p><b>1. What are the aims and objectives of the policy or function?</b> To inform and engage local residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders about Council and other local matters.</p>			
<p><b>2. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy or function?</b> 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><b>3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy or function?</b> All residents in Broxtowe.</p>			
<p><b>4. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy or function?</b> Residents, businesses, community groups, employees, Members</p>			
<p><b>5. What baseline quantitative data do you have about the policy or function relating to the different equality strands?</b> The changes agreed to the Council's resident's newsletter approach in February 2023 has enabled the Council to redirect resources into engaging with residents in a wider variety of ways. As well as encouraging more people who are able to, to use online services, this has also included more face to face engagement, co-production and collaboration with harder to reach groups and printed materials on key issues for those who need them.</p>			
<p><b>6. What baseline qualitative data do you have about the policy or function relating to the different equality strands?</b> Taking a more targeted approach to communicating with specific groups, through a wider variety of means would enable more accurate data on engagement to be recorded.</p>			
<p><b>7. What has stakeholder consultation, if carried out, revealed about the nature of the impact?</b> The last resident survey was conducted in 2017 and received less than 30 responses (0.02% of the population).  Comments were also received from stakeholder groups on the new approach adopted in February 2023, including those who are part of the Broxtowe Local Strategic Partnership. Many of these partners have been able to make use of a</p>			

Directorate:	Communications, Cultural and Civic Services	Lead officer responsible for EIA	Communications, Cultural and Civic Services Manager
wider variety of Council communication channels to promote their own work and services to local people than just the printed newsletter.			
<p><b>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:</b></p>			
<p><b>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?</b></p> <p>Options 1 and 2 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><b>Is the policy or function likely to be equally accessed by all equality groups or communities? If no, can this be justified?</b></p> <p>Options 1 and 2 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><b>Are there barriers that might make access difficult or stop different equality groups or communities accessing the policy or function?</b></p> <p>The approaches outlined will continue to attract those who are able to, to use the Council's online channels, whilst supporting those who aren't online through other engagement methods such as face to face, printed material and direct engagement with stakeholders. Option 2 would enable greater financial and officer resource to be dedicated to this.</p>			
<p><b>Could the policy or function promote or contribute to equality and good relations between different groups? If so, how?</b></p> <p>The approaches outlined provide more opportunities for the Council to engage with residents in a wider variety of ways, including building relationships with key stakeholders and people in the community, which would help support improved relations between groups.</p>			
<p><b>What further evidence is needed to understand the impact on equality?</b></p> <p>None</p>			
<p><b>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?</b></p>			
<p><b>Age:</b> Work with partners and community groups to support engagement with this group, including providing printed material on key issues, as well as opportunities</p>			

for face to face engagement as part of roadshow events. Learning from the Council's work on a co-production model with the Disability Forum will be adapted to engage with other groups, including younger and older ages groups. Continued work with key stakeholder groups to get information into their communities, as well as feedback back into the Council.

**Disability:** Continued work on a co-production model with the Disability Forum to support engagement with this group. Continued work with key stakeholder groups to get information into their communities, as well as feedback back into the Council.

**Gender:** Changes proposed are not likely to impact

**Gender Reassignment:** Changes proposed are not likely to impact

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

**Pregnancy and Maternity:** Changes proposed are not likely to impact

**Race:** Learning from the Council's work on a co-production model with the Disability Forum will be adapted to engage with these groups. Consider how translated material is provided and distributed. Continued work with key stakeholder groups to get information into their communities, as well as feedback back into the Council.

**Religion and Belief:** Changes proposed are not likely to impact

**Sexual Orientation:** Changes proposed are not likely to impact

**Care Experience:** A more targeted approach will support engagement methods which are more preferable to different groups, including younger people who may be care leavers.

**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:** 