

Report of:	Head of Environmental Health
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Portfolio Leader:	Corporate Improvement
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Track:	Cabinet: 21/07/16

**CABINET
21 JULY 2016
EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for a new format of newsletter to communicate with local residents.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to the proposal outlined at paragraphs 5.6 to 5.10 (Option 2).

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The perceptions of local Councils from members of the public are sometimes not positive. Some think they don't get value for money from their Council tax, some don't understand what District Council's responsibilities are.
- 3.2 In these challenging economic times it is important that residents know what we are doing well, what services we offer and what we don't offer, how we are spending tax payers money, the decisions we make and how they are taken.
- 3.3 Delivering effective communications improves the Councils relationships, its knowledge of our customer's demands and will enhance awareness and understanding of the services we deliver.
- 3.4 The recommended option will see the production of a 32 page magazine/newsletter of which 16 pages will be available for Council content. The remaining pages will be taken up by advertisements sourced by the publisher.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The newsletter recommended in this report offers the opportunity to promote any or all of the Corporate priorities.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Council has a number of different audiences to consider for each communication. These include Residents, visitors, Tenants, Councillors, local businesses and other stakeholders/partners.
- 5.2 In previous years re Council has delivered key messages through various communications channels, including the website, printed literature and newspapers. The communications survey which ran from 1st July to 31st August 2015 indicated that these were still the top three preferred methods. With social media coming a close fourth.
- 5.3 Chase Matters was previously printed twice yearly as a Chronicle wraparound at a cost of £2,100 per wrap, the cost of this has now risen to £2,500 per wrap. However, the distribution is limited and is only delivered to 79% of the Cannock Chase District. This publication was also available electronically via the Councils website and promoted via social media. This means that up to 21% of the Councils customers are not receiving the Councils messages.
- 5.4 Historically the Councils Economic Development team have a database of business contacts that they issue a newsletter to. This database of contacts could also be used if it is felt that we need to communicate any messages to local businesses.

Proposals

- 5.4 So far this financial year no decisions have been made for the future of external communications in the District. The Partnerships and Communications Team have looked into various options of communications to residents and have identified the following options:

Option 1: Chronicle Wraparound

- 5.5 Continue with the Chronicle wraparound twice a year; early Summer and late Winter. Email this out to the number of residents registered for the electronic version, which is uploaded to the website and promote the content via social media.

There may also be an option to print copies and distribute them to key locations within the community to pick up those residents that do not receive the Chronicle. This however would need someone resourced to do this.

If we produce a wraparound twice a year the total cost per annum would be £5,000.

Option 2: Printed Newsletter

- 5.6 The Partnerships and Communications Team have been approached by a company called Community Information Services, who provide free printed publications for local authorities and have done so for the last 20years.
- 5.7 The service is currently used by the following Councils:
East Staffordshire, Cambridge, Croydon, Stratford, Charnwood, Hertfordshire, Reading, Worcester
- 5.8 Community Information Services offer a printed publication of 32 pages of which 16 would be needed for promotion funding (which they source). We would have the opportunity to vet any advertising.
- 5.9 Community Information Services can distribute the newsletter / magazine through a mixture of blank and targeted distribution to the while of Cannock Chase District at a cost of £2,900.
- 5.10 This is the preferred option is to trial Option 2 initially as a one off and then evaluate the content and coverage achieved. Members will be advised of the outcome and any recommendations for further publications.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

Provision of £5,000 exists for the current wraparound production and is subject to only distribution to 79% of the District.

The Printed Newsletter is at a reduced cost of £2,900 and if agreed it is proposed to carry out as a trial and then evaluate the content and coverage achieved.

If finally adopted as the preferred method of communication the once a year newsletter will save the Council £2,100 per annum.

Cabinet will be aware of the Medium Term Financial position of the Council and the production of a newsletter in 2017/18 will need to be evaluated against the saving options to be considered by Cabinet in September 2016.

6.2 Legal

TBC

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 **Section 17 (Crime Prevention)**

None.

6.5 **Human Rights Act**

None.

6.6 **Data Protection**

None.

6.7 **Risk Management**

None.

6.8 **Equality & Diversity**

None.

6.9 **Best Value**

The proposed option provides a cost effective method of communicating with local residents.

7 Appendices to the Report

None

Previous Consideration

None

Background Papers

None