

21 October 2014

Community Committee

Borough Bulletin

Report of: *Ashley Culverwell Head of Borough Health, Safety and Localism*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Community Committee on 21st July 2014 it was resolved that a Borough wide news bulletin is piloted and that the first edition included the consultation on the William Hunter Way development.
- 1.2 It was also resolved that the pilot Borough wide news bulletin would cost less than £5K and feedback from residents would be sought to enable this Committee to make a decision on continuing with regular editions.
- 1.3 The final costs of the pilot edition of the 'Borough Bulletin' were £2,808.75. These were made up of: Printing costs £1,333.75 and distribution costs £1,475.00. The distribution costs were lower than any future editions would normally be as the costs were shared 50/50 with the William Hunter Way consultation.
 - The pilot edition of the Borough Bulletin was distributed w/c 15th September and contained the William Hunter Way Consultation; information on Individual Electoral Registration; William Hunter Way; Local Development Plan; upcoming Council events and a calendar of Council Committee Meetings.
- 1.4 The Distribution Company used a listing licenced from the Royal Mail for delivery. The Royal Mail list has 30,156 letterboxes in the Borough registered for distribution purposes. The Distribution Company were given 30,200 copies of the bulletin to distribute in the Borough.
- 1.5 Copies of the Borough Bulletin were available in reception at the Town Hall and at the Brentwood Centre.

- 1.6 The Borough Bulletin was also made available on the Council's website with contact details of where to obtain a paper copy. The website link was shared on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.
- 1.7 The Council received nine emails and nine telephone calls from residents (as at 8.10.14) who said they had not received a copy and addresses were taken and copies were posted to them.
- 1.8 Future projected costs per quarterly edition are: design and layout between £160-£200; printing and delivery to Royal Mail: £1,500.00; distribution by Royal Mail £1,878.00.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members agree in principle to two further editions of the Borough Bulletin for 2014/15, subject to agreement from the Finance & Resources Committee to allocate a maximum revenue budget of £10,000.**
- 2.2 That Members agree in principle to continue with quarterly editions of the Borough Bulletin for 2015/16 and beyond, subject to final approval through the annual budget setting process.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 A Borough wide newspaper known as the Brentwood Borough Newspaper was produced by the Council up until 2004. This was then replaced by a magazine known as Vision which ran until 2009.
- 3.2 Distribution of the former magazine 'Vision' was via the Brentwood Weekly News which distributes to 16,101 homes in the Borough.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The key issue that Members will need to consider is whether further editions of a Borough wide bulletin would be of benefit to residents and improve communication based on the projected costs.
- 4.2 Consideration should also be given that the publication would not reach every resident in the Borough, however, we would make it available in

other ways. Royal Mail and distribution companies work from a listing licenced from the Royal Mail. The Royal Mail list has 30,156 letterboxes in the Borough registered for distribution purposes.

- 4.3 Royal Mail and distribution companies do not deliver to addresses registered with the Mail Preference Service or Royal Mail Opt-Out service.
- 4.4 Copies of the publication would be available in the Town Hall and as with the pilot edition, we would ask the Brentwood Centre if they would also display copies in their reception area.
- 4.5 The publication would also be available to view on our website.
- 4.6 There is a need for compliance with the publicity code for Local Authorities and the Local Audit Accountability Act in considering content of any Council Bulletin and its frequency of distribution – see paragraph **8.2** for Monitoring Officer's comments.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 To enable the Council to produce two further editions of the Borough Bulletin as another communication channel with our residents.
- 5.2 To promote Council Services to our residents and events and reach those that do not have internet access or read the paid-for or free local newspapers.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Residents were invited to send feedback on whether they would like to receive a regular Council publication or an email newsletter. Four residents indicated they would like to receive a Council publication, two said they would be happy for it to be via email. Two residents said they did not want the Council to issue anymore.
- 6.2 However, it is not possible to provide members with all the feedback until the William Hunter Way consultation closes and the responses have been input. There is a question in the consultation which asks 'how would you like to be informed of developments in Brentwood?' and Borough Bulletin is an option for them to select.

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 A Borough Bulletin would support the Council's Localism priority of strengthening communities and providing additional support. It would also help to promote other priorities.

8. Implications

Financial Implications:

Name & Title: Jo-Anne Ireland, Acting Chief Executive

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- 8.1 The costs of two further editions during 2014/15 will need to be considered as part of the Half Year Budget Review. For 2015/16, any approval to continue to commit to the on-going costs will be subject to the budget setting process which will be confirmed in March 2015.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Christopher Potter, Monitoring Officer

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- 8.2 Due regard should be had to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011) which includes seven principles of local authority publicity, that it should be lawful, cost effective, objective, even handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity, and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity. The provisions contain further guidance on such matters as frequency, content and appearance of local authority newssheets or similar communications. Note should also now be taken of the Secretary of State's compliance role introduced under Section 39 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 which inserted a new section 4A until the Local Government Act 1986.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 8.3 A hand delivered bulletin will promote equality of access to Council services to ensure inclusivity to all sectors of our community.

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