

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEARNE AREA COUNCIL 25th March 2019

Community Magazine

Report of the Dearne Area Council Manager

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide Members with background information and outline the challenges experienced through the commissioning, production, design stages and delivery of the community magazines across the five Area Councils.

1.2 To provide Members with a number of alternative options for consideration.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Members note the background information, revisit the original purpose of the community magazines and their effectiveness to date and consider a number of suggested alternative options, recognising that this may be different for each area.

2.2 That Members discuss the options and propose a way forward that meets the needs of your Area Council.

3. Background and information

In April 2015, Area Councils' committed to produce a twice-yearly community magazine for five out of six area councils, the first issue to be produced in the first week of December 2015.

Up until the last issue, the magazines we're produced by a company called Community Information Services. The last issue was produced by Barnsley Card.

The magazines are designed and printed free of charge, with the cost of delivery and staff time covered by each individual area. This arrangement works by the company selling advertising space in each of the magazines.

The current magazine specification:

- Size of publication: A4, 24 pages
- Front cover - different for each Area Council.
- 12 pages editorial - set aside for Area Councils. Different content for each area council.
- 12 pages reserved for advertising sold by production company

4. Purpose of Community magazines

The community magazines have been seen as a useful communication tool particularly for those who don't access social media or electronic communications. The aim of the magazines is twofold. Firstly, to highlight what the Area Councils and

Ward Alliances are achieving in each area and the difference the work is making as well as acknowledging and celebrating those who contribute. Secondly, the community magazines aim to be a 'call to action' for new volunteers and community activists, reaching a wider and more diverse audience.

5. Challenges

There have been a number of challenges:

- The amount of resource that it has taken to produce the magazines isn't sustainable in their current formats. This last round of magazines has taken a lot of staff time (Communication Team support and Area Teams) in producing the content but in particular in the numerous rounds of revisions
- The interest through YORtender has been very limited with only one provider submitting a proposal through the last round of commissioning. A zero value contract relying on advertising income has limited the interest from the market
- Advertising hasn't always been in keeping with the nature and feel of the magazine and has sometimes been at odds with the messages trying to be delivered
- In order to keep the printing and design free of charge the number of pages for advertising and pages for Area Council content has been equally split with 12 pages each
- The number of providers able to produce magazines at zero cost and reliant on advertising are limited in the market place
- The timescales and lead in time required to pull content together and then receive the end product does often mean content is limited and out of date quickly as dates for events and particularly timings are not always known that far ahead of time.
- Various methods have been tried to seek feedback on the magazines and evaluate the impact and reach. It is still unclear how effective magazines are at reaching a wider audience and readership

6. Alternatives to production

1) Find another provider to carry on with the current model

This is an option but there are not many companies that provide this service. Barnsley Card were the only company that tendered for the last contract

2) Include information in existing publications.

There are lots of local magazines produced across the Borough. An option could be to buy editorial space in these to get local information out to residents. Any information included would need to meet the council's brand guidelines and the communication team could support with this.

3) Design and print your own information

Feedback from recent staff talkabouts shows that people want to find out more about how they can get involved more in their local communities. Each area could produce an A4, 4 page newsletter. This method would not include advertising and has the flexibility to make it local to Ward areas if necessary

- a) Design each edition - there would be a cost for design, print and distribution each time
- b) Work with the communications team to create a template for each area to fill with content – there would be a cost for initial design and then just print and distribution for each publication.

7. Distribution

Currently all areas have a different method of distribution which works for their area. Without any kind of door to door research, it's difficult to determine how many households read the newsletters.

Another option to think about would be to stop household distribution and have the newsletters available in key places in the local community.

Officer Contact: Claire Dawson

Tel: 01226 775106