

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Communities and Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny
Committee – 7 September 2010

Subject: Ward Newsletters

Report of: Sara Tomkins, Director of Communications
Maria Boylan, Strategy Leader, Corporate Performance

Summary

Production and distribution of Ward Newsletters

Recommendations

To note the proposals made to improve both the production and distribution of Ward Newsletters.

Wards Affected:

All wards

Contact Officers:

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Position: Director of Communications

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Ward Newsletters, if you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Following a report to this Committee in June a number of issues were raised regarding the production, publication and distribution of ward newsletters and this report highlights these issues and explains what steps we are taking to improve our processes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Ward newsletters are produced four 4 times a year and features a combination of locally sourced articles and corporate messages.

Members at the last meeting wanted to ensure that they can be involved in the approval of the content of the ward newsletters.

A ward newsletter schedule is produced for each issue and this highlights where ward Members should have input into content and see content/proofs for approval. The schedule can be sent to Members which will inform them of the key stages of production and sign off if they wish?

Ward Co-ordinators are sent the subject matters for the corporate content by the Communication Team. This is agreed in advance by Councillor Sue Murphy, the Executive member for Ward Co-ordination.

- 2.2 Once agreed the editorial list will be sent to ward Members along with the Ward Co-ordinators suggestions for local articles, taking into account the corporate content. At this stage Ward Members are given the opportunity to submit ideas for articles.

Members are then given a further two opportunities to input into the local content of the newsletters before going to print. They are asked to sign off first texts of the local articles before they are submitted to the Area Co-ordination /Communication teams for proofing and editing. Members then see and sign off the first proofs which include both the local and corporate articles. For future editions, we will also give Members a copy of the production timetable so that it is clear when their approval and sign-off is required.

- 2.3 Following comments from Members at the June Committee meeting, the Area Co- ordination Team has put in place a process, so that as Ward Co-ordinators submit their text, they also confirm Members have had the opportunity to contribute to local derived articles and to approve the overall look of the local pages in the ward newsletters.

- 2.4 To clarify the issue with the incorrect paper sent at June's Scrutiny, appendix 2 details the balance of corporate and local content over the year. Although there is less local content per issue (5 1/2 pages to 3) there is more local pages over the year as there are 4 issues not 2 and therefore more timely opportunities for local and corporate stories to reach residents. There are more pages per issue than the previous version so events are now included (local and city-wide) and the newsletters cost less per issue.

- 2.5 In response to the request to consider reducing the number of issues per year in order to allow more time to consult. Reducing the number of issues won't provide more time and it would reduce the amount of opportunities for timely local content. The schedules are set within tight timescales to ensure the content is newsworthy and relevant.
- 2.6 Corporate information and local news is differentiated by descriptors on each page for example corporate content is described in the footer as 'city-wide news' and local articles described as 'local news'.

3.0 Future Developments

- 3.1 Newsletter Content. To ensure that our communications with residents are meeting customer expectations we are going to conduct a series of focus groups to discuss Manchester City Council publications including 'Life in ...your ward' newsletters and Manchester People. We will be asking residents opinions on the design and content of the publications and how they use the information that is provided in them.

Also with the next delivery of the 'Life in...' newsletter will be a freepost questionnaire asking residents their views of this issue. This is attached as Appendix One. The feed back from these questionnaires and the focus groups will be used to inform future developments, the analysis will be feed back to this committee.

- 3.2 Distribution. We have worked hard with TNT over the last 2 months to ensure that future delivery of ward newsletters is as accurate as possible with Ward Co-ordinators and Ward Support Officers assisting by checking ward address lists and boundaries. For the distribution of the next newsletters in September, there will be further distribution checks with senior officers taking part in both the distribution checks and observing back checking which will be done by an independent company. This will consist of 50 interviews in each ward and 100 interviews in a control group (1,700 in total).

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 We will continue to monitor the production and distribution of the ward newsletters through feedback from members and residents and officer observation and independent research and act on this feedback to develop further improvements.

Appendix 1 - Free post return A5 Questionnaire (front and back)

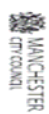


Tell us what you think

We would like to know what you think about this issue of 'Life in...'. We would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes to complete the short survey below. This postcard is FREEPOST so you won't need a stamp to send it back. Thank you.

1. Did you receive the correct version of 'Life in...' magazine for the area you live in, eg. 'Life in Ardwick' if you live in Ardwick.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
 2. How much of the magazine did you read?
 - All of it
 - Most of it
 - Some of it
 - A bit of it
 - None of it
 3. Did anyone else in your household read it?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
 4. Was it a good read?
 - Yes - very good
 - Yes - quite good
 - It was OK
 - No - poor
 - No - very poor
 5. Have you acted on anything featured in the magazine? For example, do you plan to attend an event, get in touch with the Council, or find out more about a service etc?
 - Yes - what was it?
 -
 - No
 - Don't know
 6. How well do you feel that the Council keeps you informed about news, services and what's happening in your local area?
 - Very well informed
 - Quite well informed
 - Neither well nor poorly informed
 - Poorly informed
 - Very poorly informed
 7. How old are you?
 - Younger than 18
 - 18-34
 - 35-54
 - 55-74
 - 75 or older
 8. Are you male or female?
 - Female
 - Male
- To help us to check the delivery and distribution of 'Life in...' we would appreciate it if you could let us know your postcode (please leave blank if you prefer not to).
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- Do you have any other comments you would like to make about 'Life in...' magazine?
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The information collected in this survey is used for market research purposes only. Your answers will help us to shape future communications from Manchester City Council and ensure that they are meeting residents' needs. The information will only be used by Manchester City Council and will not be disclosed to third parties. If you require more information about this survey, please call 224 5245.



Freepost MR1514
 Life Magazine Questionnaire
 Town Hall
 MANCHESTER
 M60 2BR



Appendix 2 - Clarification of the correct paper that should have been sent at the last scrutiny that was handed out during the meeting

Content	Old (Ward) Matters	New Life in...(ward)	Difference	Comment
Total pagination	8 pages per issue	12 pages per issue	50% increase in pages	More pages per issue
Front cover	Title and local image	Title and general image plus content review referring to one corporate story and one local story		The title reflects the ward & neighbourhoods –this is determined by members e.g. Life in Crumpsall covering Blackley Village or Life in Harpurhey covering Blackley, Moston, Monsall and Collyhurst
Back cover	Useful contacts, translation panel	Useful contacts, and translations panel with headshots of ward officers, local members and local neighbourhood policing and safety co-ordinator		Members can add local contacts in space provided. City wide contacts will also reduce as we develop the one number customer strategy allowing for more local contacts to be added if required.
Inside front cover	Variable welcome message ¼ or ½ page (dependent on ward/copy/issue)	General welcome copy penned on behalf of the ward coordinator with head shot of local ward coordinator as well as a contents list highlighting, local news, features and events (local and citywide)		
Previous version - remaining page 2, 3, 4-5, 6 & 7 New version – pages 3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10 & 11	Ward related news often including several generic city wide messages like free swimming, recycling, safety/police/respect messages, proud of etc 5½ or 5¾ pages of local news.	Page 3 – local Page 4 – corporate Page 5 – local Page 6-7 events ¾ citywide ¼ local Page 8 – ½ page ad ½ corporate Page 9 – corporate Page 10- local Page 11 – ½ page ad ½ corporate	3 pages of local 3 pages of corporate A double page spread (dps) on events including local and citywide (25:75) Two ½ page ads (MCC key message)	Per issue there is less local content 5 ½ pages down to 3 but the newsletter does have the additional information on events incl. local events (as requested by residents) plus corporate information opportunities. N.B. Members determine local content and corporate content is appropriate for all wards
Frequency	2 then 1 a year based on reduced budgets So 5 ½ - ¾ pages a year of local content	4 a year (every quarter) 12 pages of local content 12 pages of corporate content 4 dps on events (local and citywide) 8 ½ page ads	4 newsletters v 1 per year Over twice as much	However, over the year there are more local pages for members and ward coordination teams to utilise as well as opportunities to engage residents in events locally and citywide.

Total Cost (inc. creation, print & distribution)	£70k per issue 32p per copy/issue	£42k per issue 19p per copy per issue	40% reduction in cost 13p per copy less.	
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