

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 February 2019
Subject:	Tewkesbury Borough News Review
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

In October 2017, the Executive Committee agreed a number of recommendations for Tewkesbury Borough News, including for it to be published twice a year in a magazine format – a move from three times a year in newspaper format.

As part of the changes, Tewkesbury Borough Council entered into a contract with Wychavon District Council to design the magazine for a 12 month period, with a review and formal competitive process to be carried out after this time.

This report reviews the implementation of the recommendations and sets out the next steps in terms of the formal competitive process for securing a designer moving forward.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Tewkesbury Borough News Review and how the arrangements have worked over the initial 12 month period.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To give assurance that the review recommendations are in the process of being implemented.

Resource Implications:

As part of the Executive Committee recommendations, the overall cost of Tewkesbury Borough News was reduced by £4,066 per year. It is hoped that this may be reduced further.

Legal Implications:

The tender process referred to in the report will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules as set out in the Constitution.

Risk Management Implications:

To ensure we have a cost effective way of communicating with our residents.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The 12 month trial will be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2018

Environmental Implications:

None.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Tewkesbury Borough News is the Council's main proactive communications method, which reaches all households in the borough.
- 1.2** Following a Member workshop held at the end of 2016 to gain feedback on corporate communications, it was agreed that an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group be set up to review Tewkesbury Borough News.
- 1.3** The Overview and Scrutiny Working Group carried out their review over three sessions, as described in the final report attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.4** The Executive Committee endorsed the findings of the review and agreed the final recommendations as follows:
- That two magazine editions of Tewkesbury Borough News be published per year with a one-flick PDF online version placed in a prominent place on the council's website.
 - That Head of Corporate Services be authorised to
 - Enter into a contract with Wychavon District Council for a 12-month trial period and to waive the Contract Rules accordingly.
 - Engage with parish councils who do not currently submit news articles
 - Seek to work to maximise advertising income.
- 1.5** Now that 12 months have passed, and two editions of the magazine have been issued, in line with the final recommendations the Council will go out to tender for the design and print element of the magazine.

2.0 12 MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW

2.1 This report provides an overview of the past 12 months split into the following categories:

- Overview of past 12 months
- Costs
- Advertising
- News from Parish Councils
- Feedback from readers
- Tender process

To give Members a 'quick glance' view of progress, there is a status key next to each section:

😊 This element of the project has been successful.

😐 This element of the project has been successful in parts but requires work.

☹️ This element of the project was unsuccessful and a plan will be put in place to ensure it is achieved for 2019 onwards.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF PAST 12 MONTHS

2.2.1 The Council's Communications team has worked hard to achieve a new magazine format working with new designers. This has included introducing a new writing style (suitable for magazine format), new features, and setting up new working practices internally and with Wychavon District Council. The two editions of the magazine were successfully issued in April 2018 and November 2018.

2.2.2 Overall, the feedback from both the Council's Communications team and Wychavon District Council's design team has been positive. Working with a local authority design team meant that we were able to easily liaise with each other and there was a clear understanding from the outset as to the purpose of the magazine. It has also proved to be a learning curve for us in terms of understanding exactly what helps us to produce a successful publication, including:

- Ensuring content is at final draft when it is sent over to the designer.
- Ensuring images used in the magazine are of an excellent quality and are eye-catching.
- Where the design does not quite meet the brief, a bit of flexibility is required to suggest amends.
- A clear timetable of deadlines needs to be agreed at the start of each edition.

2.3 COSTS 😊

2.3.1 One of the main objectives of the review was to save money. Previously, Tewkesbury Borough News in newspaper format cost just under £25,000 per year. By moving to magazine format and being delivered twice a year, savings of £4,066 per year were achieved.

2.3.2 It is anticipated that delivery costs will continue to rise as the number of homes in the borough increases and Royal Mail continue to have annual price increases. However, it is aimed to make more income from advertising (as explained in Paragraph) and remain hopeful that tender bids for the design and print of the magazine are competitive.

2.4 ADVERTISING USED TO OFFSET COST ☹️

2.4.1 Tewkesbury Borough News includes paid-for advertising, which is used to offset some of the cost of the magazine.

2.4.2 For the first edition, Wychavon District Council sourced the advertising bringing in £900 of income; however, advertisers were not particularly forthcoming and felt they did not have the capacity to carry this out for the second edition of the magazine.

2.4.3 Gathering advertising is a time-consuming exercise and, unfortunately, there is no in-house capacity for this. Therefore, it has been included as an essential category in the tender bid document and, to encourage competition, it is suggested that any income raised from advertising above £1,200 per edition will be shared between the Council and the designer.

2.5 NEWS FROM PARISH COUNCILS ☹️

2.5.1 One element of the final recommendations which has not yet been fully explored is to engage further with Parish Councils to ensure areas from across the borough are represented within the magazine.

2.5.2 Currently, Members and Parish Councils receive an email asking them to submit ideas for the magazine but it tends to be the same areas responding each time.

2.5.3 To overcome this issue, different areas of the borough are proactively being covered in the magazine on a rolling basis. For example, main features have included Staverton Airport; a feature on a local electrician company; and, in the next edition, a community-focused garden nursery based in the borough.

2.5.4 In addition, the Communications Officer will attend the next Town and Parish Council Seminar and make contact with Parish Clerks for their ideas.

2.6 FEEDBACK FROM READERS 😊

2.6.1 A light touch survey was carried out with the Council's Citizens' Panel (approx. 250 members) after the first edition of the new magazine format was delivered to gauge readers' feedback.

26 responses were received, all of which were overwhelmingly positive.

24 respondents said they felt it was a great change when asked about the new format of the magazine.

25 respondents felt there was a good balance of community, Council and business news.

2.6.2 In terms of areas for improvement, the main feedback was to ensure there is representation across the borough and not to focus too closely on Tewkesbury and Winchcombe. This will be resolved through increased engagement with Parish Councils as part of the content-setting process.

2.7 NEXT STEPS: TENDER PROCESS 😊

2.7.1 As part of the final recommendations, it was agreed that a formal competitive exercise be carried out after 12 months. This process has commenced and the tender bid document went live on 11 February with a deadline of 1 March for submissions.

2.7.2 The tender process gives an opportunity to outline exact requirements for the design and print of the magazine. Regular enquiries are received about the design and print of Tewkesbury Borough News, so it is hoped there will be a good level of interest.

2.7.3 There is normally a spring edition and a winter edition of the magazine; however, due to Purdah, this year the first edition will be issued in June. In line with that timeframe, it is aimed to award the contract on 25 March with the contract to start from 12 April.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 A consultation was carried out with the Citizens' Panel after the first edition of the magazine format.

Operational managers were consulted in terms of the impact of the new magazine format.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 None

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 None

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 None

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 None

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 None

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 None

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: Communications and Policy Manager
01684 272002 clare.evans@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Tewkesbury Borough News Review Report