

Subject: Rossendale Alive Newsletter
Distribution

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 22nd October 2008

Report of: Head of People and Policy

Portfolio Finance and Resources

Holder:

Key Decision: Yes / ~~No~~

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend a change in the distribution method used to deliver the Council's Rossendale Alive newsletter to residents three times per year.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
- Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit (Economy)
- Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- No distribution method is 100% effective. All of the possible distribution options carry a degree of risk that some people will not receive the item being distributed. However, the option being recommended maximises the number of people who will receive the newsletter
- The Council will be liable for the full cost of the distribution if it fails to deliver the newsletter to the Royal Mail on-time.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 The current distribution option involves the use of a door-to-door distribution company to 28,000 properties in built up areas and the use of a mailing list to reach approximately 384 rural properties.
- 4.2 A recent proposal from a distribution agency to arrange delivery using a combination of Royal Mail full sector coverage delivery and Direct Mail postal copies would offer the Council a small saving, increased circulation and improved reliability in distribution. Given the need to continue to demonstrate value for money and in light of the recent proposal, newsletter distribution options have been reconsidered and new proposals are being brought forward for consideration. Four options have been considered.
- 4.3 **Option 1 – Status Quo** – Delivery continues with a door to door distribution company and an additional list of postal copies to rural properties. This option does not reach as many households as Option 2 but does offer greater flexibility in distribution dates.
- 4.4 **Option 2 - Royal Mail Door to Door/Direct Mail Combination** - Distribution through the Royal Mail using a combination of Royal Mail full sector coverage delivery and Direct Mail to the remaining 1988 properties. This option reaches the highest number of households possible but has the disadvantage of requiring distribution dates to be booked 6 to 9 months in advance in order to ensure full distribution in all postcode sectors. Option 2 is the preferred option.
- 4.5 **Option 3 - Walksort** – Distribution is carried out by the Royal Mail. Newsletters are individually addressed and sorted into the walk rounds for each postal delivery worker and delivered to the relevant sorting office. The option offers greater flexibility than Option 2 but at a significantly greater price.
- 4.6 **Option 4 - Mailsort 1400** - Distribution is carried out by the Royal Mail. Newsletters are individually addressed and sorted into postcode sectors. The option offers greater flexibility than Option 2 but at a significantly greater price.

	Number of copies delivered	Total Cost
Option 1 – Status Quo Door-to-Door distribution to 28,000 homes at of cost of £95/1000 properties = £2,660. Additional postal copies to 384 rural properties at a cost of £370/1000 properties = £142.08	28,384	£2802.08
Option 2 – Royal Mail Door to Door/Direct Mail Combination Door-to-door distribution using Royal Mail to 28,313 properties at a cost of £69.58/1,000 = £1970.02. Additional Direct Mail copies in the post to 1988 properties at of cost of £390/1000 properties = £775.32.	30,301	£2,745.33

Option 3 – Walksort	30,313	£5,976.36
Direct Mail coverage to 30,313 properties using Royal Mail Walksort at a cost of £197.16/1000 properties.		
Option 4 - Mailsort 1400	30,313	6,323.90
Direct Mail coverage to 30,313 properties using Royal Mail Mailsort 1400 (7 day service) at a cost of £208.62/1000.		

4.7 Further value for money work will take place during 2009 in order to explore options for reducing the production costs of the newsletter and Councillors will be updated in due course.

Preferred Option - Considerations

4.8 Distribution is undertaken by postal workers within a 5 day period as part of their normal delivery duties. The service can be specified down to the level of individual postcode sectors e.g. BB4 7 - however some of these properties may fall outside the borough boundaries. A computerised mapping exercise has identified those areas which would be most suitable for door-to-door delivery and those which require Direct Mail 'infill' distribution. The infill distribution helps to ensure that the maximum number of homes receive the newsletter with leakage to other local authority areas minimised. Each postal delivery worker is required to sign to say that they have delivered 'X?' copies of the newsletter in their delivery area so the degree of accountability is high.

4.9 The biggest consequence of this change is that the Council must book distribution slots 6 to 9 months in advance and if for any reason the Council is not able to deliver its newsletter to the Royal Mail on time we will lose our distribution slot and remain liable for full payment. Therefore, completion of the newsletter on time will have to take precedence over other activities undertaken by the Communications Team and will have to be a consideration in any decisions taken by the Senior Management Team in relation to the newsletter or communication activities.

4.10 When distribution was previously considered, the benefits of flexible distribution dates outweighed the higher costs of distribution and the inflexibility in delivery slots offered by the Royal Mail. However, the Rossendale Alive newsletter is now a more established product and it is becoming easier to plan how long it takes to produce. Contributors are also getting better at observing the newsletter deadlines. Therefore, the arguments in favour of flexible distribution dates are diminished in favour of the increased level of distribution, greater reliability and small cost saving that Royal Mail distribution can achieve compared with existing arrangements.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 The small saving achieved can be utilised to offset any increase in printing costs expected during 2008/09. All costs are therefore contained within 08/09 budget resources.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 No contract will be entered in to until the Legal Services Section have checked and agreed the contract.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

7.1 The publication of the newsletter will be prioritised within the Communication Team.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Getting our distribution strategy right is important for the Council and will help us to achieve our communication and customer service objectives.

8.2 The increased level of distribution, greater accountability and small cost saving to be achieved now outweigh the inflexibilities that previously counted against Royal Mail distribution options. By setting rigorous deadlines and sticking to them in the future we can ensure that the newsletter is ready for distribution in its allocated slot with the Royal Mail.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 Cabinet are recommended to approve the new proposals for newsletter distribution using a combination of Royal Mail full sector coverage delivery to 28,313 households and Direct Mail postal copies to 1,988 households. This will be arranged with the Royal Mail through a national distribution agency on the Council's behalf.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Publicised in the Forward Plan and consultation meetings with the Portfolio holder for Finance and Resources.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required ~~Yes~~ / No

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached ~~Yes~~ / No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required ~~Yes~~ / No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required ~~Yes~~ / No

Contact Officer	
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No background papers