

STAFF REPORT

TO: Communications Subcommittee

FROM: Communications Adviser

DATE: 17 November 2010

REFERENCE: C797

SUBJECT: **Newsline Review Progress Report RFN10/11/12**

BACKGROUND

The 20th anniversary of Newsline was held this year – a milestone of some note in the field of Council communication.

This milestone, plus the fact that Council's communication strategy and various communication policies have been updated and added to, presented an appropriate time to review the aspirations, value and delivery of Newsline.

The first principle review consists of the following components:

1. A written report on Newsline covering the background to the magazine, looking at what Council hoped to achieve through its publication, outlining its production and delivery process and showing where it fits in Council's whole communication regime. This was delivered to the Subcommittee 18 August Meeting.
2. A written survey accessed by all residents and ratepayers with questions designed to give Council information on:
 - i) current awareness and usefulness of Newsline
 - (ii) its place in and contribution to, local communities
 - (iii) relevance of its content
 - (iv) its place and development in Council's future community information network.

A summary of the survey's findings is attached.

The survey itself will be distributed to residents and ratepayers:-

- a. via Newsline - *during September 2010 with a postage paid, cut and fold form.*
 - b. via Council's website – during September with an online version of Newsline
3. A discussion around the survey questions will be conducted with all ratepayer groups within the District.
 4. A written report analysing the questionnaire, the discussion with community associations and their related media outlets, relating findings back to the reasons for the existence of Newsline and making recommendations as to the viability of Newsline and its future development.

Survey Summary of Results

The survey was delivered to all residents within the 17 September issue of Newsline (circulation 19,000).

Replies have been coming into the office ever since, with replies being received as late as last week.

Of the 432 survey responses 363 have been rated as positive/neutral with the remainder (69) being rated as negative.

Positive/Neutral replies are classified as such for the range of replies that do not call for the removal of Newsline as a Council publication. If not clearly supportive of Newsline the responses in this field provided suggestions as to the content needed.

The negative responses can be identified clearly into three camps:

- Council should not be publishing this material,
- The information is/should be carried in local papers, and
- These funds should be redirected to local community papers i.e. Wakefield Village News.

What is apparent is a lack of knowledge of the funding regulatory model that enables the Council to produce Newsline. The fact that the Council has to publish Public Notices, the bulk of the Council's advertising costs, allows us to transfer the cost of the advertisements normally provided to newspapers to the publishing of Newsline - a cost neutral exercise. Council also receives revenue from advertising within Newsline which helps off-set the cost of production.

The questions regarding the opportunity to receive Newsline online were not supported on the whole. It is assumed this is a reflection of the lack of broadband coverage throughout the District.

The suggestions provided all pointed to more 'information rather than entertainment'. These suggestions will be explored further with the Community Associations as will the relationship with the Associations' own publications.

In summary, the results, while early in the process, are pointing to support for a continued evolution of Newsline, as opposed to a revolutionary change.

SIGNIFICANCE

This report is an information item and, therefore, the matters covered in this report are not significant.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Communications Subcommittee notes the content of the Newsline Review Progress Report RFN10/11/12

Chris Choat
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