



CITY OF BAYSWATER

TECHNICAL SERVICES AND FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

ITEM UNDER SEPARATE COVER

**Items 7.2.13
Corporate Communications**

4 December 2012

Item 7.2.13 Corporate Communications Strategy**Attachment: 1. Costs and Benefits of Advertorials (Confidential)****Officer: Chief Executive Officer**Application

To consider producing a quarterly residents' newsletter as an alternative to advertorials placed in the local newspapers as a means of improving communications with the community.

Background

Currently the City uses a range of communications vehicles to inform the community about its policies, programs and initiatives. These include: media releases, media responses, the weekly Mayor's Column, and a monthly Advertorial placed in the Eastern Reporter Community Newspaper. The media releases, Mayor's Column and advertorials also feature on the City's web site, which is itself a source of information for the community. The use of a newsletter is currently limited to production of the budget bulletin, which is distributed with the rates notice and Christmas edition.

It should be noted that in addition to this generic communications, project specific communications is undertaken by the City. As an example, this can take the form of flyers, posters, banners and run-of-paper advertising to promote an event such as *The Feature at The RISE*.

A residents' perceptions survey undertaken for the City by Catalyse in the first half of 2012 suggested that the community would like the City to improve its communications and community engagement.

Feedback received in developing the draft Strategic Community Plan mirrored that of the perceptions survey and also suggested that improving communications should be a priority for the City.

Since undertaking the perceptions survey, the City has launched its Facebook page and Twitter accounts. Both of these social media have gradually built an audience, (with 135 likes and a weekly reach of between 400 and 1,000 on Facebook and a current following of around 430 on Twitter).

At the 9 October 2012 Councillor Workshop, as part of the discussion on the Community Strategic Plan, a number of Councillors expressed a desire to consider producing a residents' newsletter as an alternative to the full page advertorials that currently appear in the Eastern Reporter Community Newspaper. In particular, at the workshop, concerns were expressed regarding the distribution and coverage by local newspapers of the City.

Subsequently, at the Councillor Workshop held on 27 November 2012, a briefing paper was presented setting out the benefits and disadvantages of the newsletter and advertorial approaches, together with indicative costs associated with both.

Comment

The City's current practice is to place a monthly *News in Brief* advertorial in the Eastern Reporter Community Newspaper as the preferred method for keeping the community informed about the City's initiatives and events.

The costs associated and associated extra benefits to the City associated with the advertorial are detailed in the confidential attachment.

Some of the advantages and disadvantages of using advertorials and newsletters are summarised in table 1 below:

Table 1	Advertorials	Newsletters
Advantages	<p>Provides information in a broadsheet / newspaper setting that is familiar to readers and regarded by them as more credible.</p> <p>A newspaper approach is regarded by readers as a value-for-money option for presenting information.</p> <p>Having a guaranteed position in the newspaper means readers will know where to look for the information about the City.</p>	<p>Print finish and quality (relative to newsprint) of a newsletter means it is perceived as having economic value, which can improve the likelihood it will be read by the intended audience.</p> <p>Newsletters may also be kept longer, providing an opportunity for more members of a household to read the publication.</p> <p>Information is not competing with other articles or advertorials for the attention of readers.</p>
Disadvantages	<p>One of the disadvantages, which was highlighted by Councillors during workshop discussions, is that distribution of the newspaper does not consistently cover the City as a whole, (as newspapers struggle to recruit and maintain a network of walkers to undertake deliveries).</p> <p>When letterbox dropped with other marketing collateral, the newspaper can be treated in the same way as junk mail and binned.</p>	<p>The perceived value and cost of the newsletter can be deemed a "waste of ratepayer's money". This is particularly so if the content is regarded as spin doctoring. However, this issue can be addressed if an editorial policy is developed for the newsletter that states its intent and balance of content.</p> <p>When letterbox dropped with other marketing collateral, can be treated as junk mail and binned.</p>

In both cases, advertorial and newsletter, distribution can be problematical. Where a letterbox drop is used, coverage can range from 90 per cent upwards. A general rule is that the greater the coverage provided, the higher the cost. For example, should Council elect to distribute a newsletter using Australia Post, the cost is likely to be approximately \$0.50 per item, (these costs will be confirmed at the meeting).

The Media/Communications budget for 2012-13 provides \$80,000 for advertorials and for print/publications. Of this, approximately \$40,000 has been allocated. This would provide the option, should Council wish to produce a newsletter distributed using the rates database, to produce two quarterly editions at a cost of approximately \$20,000 per edition.

Given the need to improve communications with our residents highlighted by the perceptions survey and as part of developing the Strategic Community Plan, ensuring a high degree of coverage is important in ensuring the City keeps its residents informed.

Strategic Implications

In accordance with the City of Bayswater Strategic Plan - The Future of Our City 2011-2015, the following applies:

"Key Result Area 5: Leadership and Governance

5.5 We ensure Council is accountable to its community."

Policy Implications

Nil.

Financial Implications

Option 1 - monthly advertorials a cost of approximately \$48,000 a year

Option2 - quarterly printed newsletter distributed via letterbox drop using walkers at a cost of approximately \$8,000 per edition.

Option 3 - quarterly newsletter distributed via Australia Post at a cost of around \$20,000 per edition.

Voting Requirements

Simple Majority Required

Officer's Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. Notes the options for print communications with ratepayers, (advertorials and newsletters)**
- 2. Supports modifications to the marketing communications program in light of the community feedback received as part of the perceptions survey and Strategic Community Plan forums as follows:**
 - a. Cancel the advertorials scheduled during the period January to June 2013;**
 - b. Produce a quarterly newsletter, with a supporting Editorial Policy, for the periods February/March 2013, May/June 2013; August/September 2013 and November/December 2013.**
 - c. Continue with the weekly Mayor's Column; and**
 - d. Continue to support use of Social Media, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as the City's website to provide the community with information.**
- 3. Review the newsletter program as part of the budget process for 2013-14.**

Moved:

Seconded: