



To: Leader: Cllr Ian Nimmo-Smith
Report by: Ashley Perry, Corporate Marketing and
Communications Manager
Relevant scrutiny Strategy & Resources Scrutiny 12/10/2009
committee: Committee
Wards affected: All Wards

CAMBRIDGE MATTERS EDITORIAL POLICY Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 At the meeting of Council on July 16, 2009 Cambridge Matters, the Council's magazine for residents, was discussed. At that meeting Council resolved that a report should be brought to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee considering the role of Cambridge Matters, its effectiveness and value for money and its future editorial policy.
- 1.2 This report asks the Leader to agree recommendations for the future role, editorial policy and management of Cambridge Matters. It also sets out some methods of assessing value for money and effectiveness.
- 1.3 These recommendations are made in the context of the 2008 review of corporate marketing, savings of £75k made across publications budgets in all departments for 2009-2010 and the review of communications and marketing activity that is currently being led by the Interim Director of Customer and Democratic Services.

2. Recommendations

The Leader is recommended to approve:

- a) The transfer of responsibility for producing Cambridge Matters to the Leader's portfolio from that of the Executive Councillor for Environmental Services and Recycling. This to be followed with a transfer of relevant budgets and officer resources for producing Cambridge Matters from Waste Strategy to Corporate Marketing with immediate effect;

- b) The new editorial policy for Cambridge Matters, which sets out its role and how it will be managed (as set out in Appendix A).

3. Background

- 3.1 Cambridge Matters was first published in 2004 to promote recycling changes and waste reduction measures to residents including the subsequent move to alternate weekly bin collections.
- 3.2 Since then it has been used to promote other environmental issues. It is produced 4 times per year and comprises 24 pages of which nine are advertising. It is designed and printed by an external publishing company, which generates income from the sale of advertising in the magazine.
- 3.3 In June 2008 the Council carried out a review of its corporate marketing function. The potential to make better and broader use of Cambridge Matters to communicate with residents across the range of Council services was identified as a key recommendation.
- 3.4 Under the proposed editorial policy Cambridge Matters will be developed to include content about the Council's other services. The September edition included local democracy and councillor contact information and the December issue will continue this broader approach.
- 3.5 Given the change to more corporate content it is recommended that responsibility for producing Cambridge Matters, along with relevant budgets and officer resources be moved from Waste Strategy where it is currently produced to Corporate Marketing. This will mirror the transfer of the magazine to the Leader's portfolio from that of the Executive Councillor for Environment and Recycling.
- 3.6 An officer from Waste Strategy currently spends up to 20% of their time producing Cambridge Matters. In future they will need to spend the same proportion of their time working within Corporate Marketing to support production of the corporate magazine.
- 3.7 Further developments in terms of arrangements for producing the magazine will be considered again following the review of marketing and communications currently being carried out by the Interim Director of Customer and Democratic Services.

3.8 This review, which will be reported to members, will look at the resources allocated to marketing activity across the Council and whether desired outcomes are being achieved and may have implications for the future role of Cambridge Matters.

4. Future role and editorial policy

4.1 The government's empowerment agenda means councils have a new duty to inform, consult and involve their stakeholders. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) examines how well councils and their partners engage citizens and considers feedback on levels of public satisfaction.

4.2 Surveys across local government carried out by organisations including Ipsos MORI consistently show that residents who feel well informed about services also give their Councils higher satisfaction ratings.

4.3 In October 2008 a survey carried out by mruk research in Cambridge showed that 65% of those surveyed read Cambridge Matters and 27% of those respondents said they would behave differently as a result of reading the magazine.

4.4 The 2008 Place Survey results showed that residents do not feel well informed about some of the Council's services.

4.5 In this context Cambridge Matters represents an important channel for direct communication between the Council and residents. As a direct link to every household in the city it has a role to play in providing information about services, Council performance and how Council Tax is spent as well as engaging residents in decision-making through consultation.

4.6 The Council should use the magazine to present information on the broadest range of Council services, beyond the environmental issues that has been its content for the past five years, to help residents access those services that they need and may not previously have been aware of.

4.7 To guide this development an editorial policy, attached as Appendix A, has been drafted. This also sets out roles and responsibilities for the future production of Cambridge Matters and how content will be decided for each edition. The Leader is asked to agree that editorial policy.

5. Value for money and effectiveness

- 5.1 While external advertising currently covers the bulk of the production costs, each edition has a Council subsidy of approximately £2,400. This payment is made to the publishing company to increase the proportion of editorial content by one page and to facilitate the use of recycled paper. City Council services sometimes place adverts in Cambridge Matters, dealing directly with the publishing company Bright Publishing Ltd. Over the last 5 editions, an average of £755 per edition has been spent on advertising by Council services.
- 5.2 Distribution of the magazine is carried out by a specialist company at a cost of £4,300 per edition. It should be noted that a reassessment of delivery arrangements led to savings of approximately £2,000 per edition in December 2008.
- 5.3 In summary, it currently costs the Council £30,020 a year (including internal advertising) to print and distribute 4 editions of Cambridge Matters. Each edition of Cambridge Matters costs approximately 17p per household per edition.
- 5.4 A 2008 survey of 53 district councils conducted by Public PR found the average cost of residents' magazines and newspapers was 19p per copy.
- 5.5 Savings of £75k were made from publications budgets in all departments for the 2009-2010 budget. Part of the rationale for this was that better use would be made of Cambridge Matters as the main vehicle for printed communications.
- 5.6 The September edition of Cambridge Matters included councillor contact details and area committee information previously published and delivered as the Know Your Councillor leaflet. Including this information in Cambridge Matters led to a saving of £7,000.
- 5.7 With broader content the objective will be to achieve further savings by reducing the number of other publications being produced. Cambridge Matters should be viewed as the first option for printed material as set out in the draft editorial policy.
- 5.8 Heads of service will need to critically evaluate whether there is a strong case for printing separate documents in future. It will be necessary for them to work with Corporate Marketing to consider what information can be included in Cambridge Matters and / or the Council's website.

6 Programme of evaluation

- 6.1 The initial priority for Corporate Marketing in managing the magazine will be to broaden the content, meet the provisions of the editorial policy and to fulfil the requirements set out in this report in terms of value for money and effectiveness.
- 6.2 As well as saving money by reducing the number of leaflets produced it will be important to understand the views of residents on the magazine. A readership survey will be included in the pages of Cambridge Matters on at least an annual basis.
- 6.3 This will also be replicated on the website to capture the views of residents who may not be Cambridge Matters readers. Depending on budgets it may also be possible to commission more in depth independent research on the magazine.
- 6.4 The results of future Place Surveys and Citizens Surveys will also be used to assess its success.
- 6.5 An annual benchmarking exercise will be undertaken to assess whether the costs of producing Cambridge Matters are comparable with other Council magazines. This should involve reviewing quotes from other design, print and delivery suppliers to ensure the Council is paying competitive rates.
- 6.6 Looking ahead and depending on the findings of the Interim Director of Customer and Democratic Services it may be appropriate to consider more extensive reappraisal of the format, frequency, advertising and publication arrangements for the magazine. Opportunities to work with partners such as the police and health services should also be explored.

6. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Review of marketing and communications report "Improving communications, communicating improvement", June 2008

7. Appendices

Appendix A - Cambridge Matters editorial policy

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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Appendix A - Cambridge Matters editorial policy

Purpose of Cambridge Matters:

In publishing this magazine the Council aims to:

- Improve access to services by providing residents with the information they need;
- Engage residents in decision-making through consultation;
- Promote the role of the Council as a community leader;
- Communicate the work the Council is doing to achieve its medium term objectives;
- Reduce the number of other publications produced by incorporating them in Cambridge Matters;
- Provide feedback on Council expenditure and performance;
- Address key issues of interest to residents.

Responsibilities:

- Corporate Marketing, in discussion with directors and heads of service, will be responsible for drafting a forward schedule of key content and deadlines for the magazine for the year ahead. This forward plan will be reported to corporate management team (CMT);
- When approved the forward plan will be sent to directors and heads of service and published on the intranet. It will be sent to party leaders for information;
- For each edition Corporate Marketing will consult directors and departmental management teams in good time on priorities;
- Corporate Marketing will draw up a list of the main items of content arising from those discussions and this will be reported to CMT;
- Corporate Marketing will take responsibility for commissioning the content (words and images), editing submissions and liaising with suppliers to produce and distribute the magazine;
- The final proof of Cambridge Matters will be signed-off by the Chief Executive.

Content:

- The majority of content will feature in the forward plan and the list of content for each edition that will be considered by CMT. However, Corporate Marketing will have discretion over additional content in order to react in a timely way to issues that were not foreseen at the planning stages;
- Content should be focused on at least one of the following:
 - Engage residents in services through consultation or inviting feedback;

- Engage residents in the operation of the Council (e.g. area committees);
- Provide information that residents need to access services;
- Provide information about new services;
- Promote services that generate income for the Council;
- Provide information about Council decisions.
- Content will be high quality, accessible to all and be representative of the diversity of Cambridge city and will support the Council's equalities objectives;
- Content will meet the requirements of the Local Government Code of Publicity to ensure there is no political bias;
- Content will ensure a good balance of Council services is represented. The work of any department will generally be presented corporately as the work of the Council. Department names will only be used where necessary
- All staff will have the opportunity to contribute content but it is their responsibility to ensure the appropriate head of service has been consulted to check for factual accuracy;
- Content should have the widest possible appeal;
- Content must be factually accurate;
- Copy should be written in plain English to make it easy to read;
- Images will be strong and good quality by being illustrative and people-focused wherever possible;
- Corporate Marketing will have discretion on whether to include any non-planned content;
- Corporate Marketing will edit submissions to ensure they meet any agreed style;
- Corporate Marketing will be responsible for the layout and design of each edition.

Timing:

- Corporate Marketing will be responsible for drafting publication dates for Cambridge Matters and consulting directors and departmental management teams on these;
- Cambridge Matters will be produced at times that support the Council's priorities. This means that as a minimum editions will be produced:
 - Before Christmas to publicise the bank holiday bin collections and Council's opening hours;
 - During the summer to include election results and councillor contact details (previously the Know Your Councillor leaflet), area committee information and children and young people's events;
 - In spring with information on the Council's budget and plans for the next twelve months.