

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to the Executive for Decision 05 December 2016

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Policy and Resources
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fareham Today Review</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Finance and Resources
<b>Strategy/Policy:</b>	Medium Term Financial Strategy
<b>Corporate Objective:</b>	Dynamic, prudent and progressive council; strong and inclusive communities

#### **Purpose:**

This report sets out the results of the recent Fareham Today review and seeks approval for a number of changes to the production and distribution of the magazine.

#### **Executive summary:**

A proposal to move to an online version of Fareham Today and to only produce printed copies on request was presented as part of the Efficiency Savings report at the 10 October meeting of the Executive.

The way people read and access news and local information has changed in recent years. Fareham Today has been published for a long time during which technology and the growth of the internet have advanced rapidly. Whilst circulations of print newspapers and magazines continue to decline, online magazines or newspapers have become immensely popular.

This shift towards reading news and magazines online calls into question whether the primarily print focused approach of Fareham Today is meeting the changing needs of our residents and makes best use of Council resources.

This report outlines the results of the review and outlines proposals to make the magazine more responsive to the changing needs of residents as well as result in considerable annual savings.

**Recommendation/Recommended Option:**

That the Executive:

- a) notes the results of the review of Fareham Today;
- b) agrees the proposal to move to an online version of the magazine;
- c) agrees to distribute paper copies to people that request it, as well as to libraries and community centres;
- d) agrees to produce a new ten page edition of the magazine every two months; and
- e) agrees to the proposed arrangements for transition to the online magazine format.

**Reason:**

To make Fareham Today magazine more responsive to the changing needs of residents as well as resulting in savings.

**Cost of proposals:**

The level of savings achieved will depend on the number of people that sign up for the paper copy of the magazine.

Any costs associated with the transition to the online magazine format will be contained within existing budgets.

**Reference papers:      Efficiency Savings Executive Report 10 October 2016**

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## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Executive Briefing Paper

<b>Date:</b>	5 December 2016
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fareham Today Review</b>
<b>Briefing by:</b>	Director of Finance and Resources
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Policy and Resources

#### INTRODUCTION

1. A decision was taken at the 10 October meeting of the Executive to agree to proposals outlined in Efficiency Savings report presented at that meeting. One of these proposals was to move to an online version of Fareham Today and to only produce printed copies on request.
2. The way people read and access news and local information has changed in recent years. Fareham Today has been published for a long time during which technology and the growth of the internet have advanced rapidly. In 2015, 86% percent of homes in Great Britain had access to the internet, with 78% of adults (39.3 million) using the internet every day or almost every day. This was more than twice as many as in 2006.
3. The internet and social media have changed the way people keep up to date with news and local events over the last 10 years. This has had a big impact on traditional print media with less people buying printed newspapers and magazines. For example, The Independent recently stopped publishing and UK consumer magazines lost circulation by an average of 5.3 per cent in the first six months of this year alone.
4. Whilst circulations of print newspapers and magazines continue to decline, online magazines or newspapers have become immensely popular, with 62% of internet users last year regularly reading them. These trends are expected to continue as more and more people look online for their content.
5. This shift towards reading news and magazines online calls into question whether the primarily print focused approach of Fareham Today is meeting the changing needs of our residents and makes best use of Council resources.
6. This report considers the costs in producing Fareham Today against these cultural changes. It then proposes future options for producing the magazine in a way that meets the changing needs of our residents whilst also making considerable annual revenue savings.

## A LOOK AT FAREHAM TODAY

7. Fareham Today has been published since at least the 1990's. The magazine was issued four times a year in spring, summer, autumn and winter. However, it was agreed at the 2 April 2012 meeting of the Executive that the number of regular editions would be reduced to three per year to lower revenue costs. The reduction in design, printing and distribution costs resulted in savings of £10,000 per year.
8. The current format of Fareham Today is a 24 page (including the front and back covers) full colour A4 magazine that covers a range of local topics, council and partner initiatives as well as local interest stories. Every edition contains a paid for back page advert.
9. In addition to the regular editions, we currently produce ad hoc 'special editions' which tend to focus on a single Borough wide topic. The most recent was the 'Where next for housing in Fareham?' issue published in November 2015.
10. Just over 51,000 copies are distributed via Royal Mail to all households, businesses and public buildings in the Borough. Copies are also mailed directly from the printers to 1789 households. These are for residents who have notified us in the past that they have not received a copy of the magazine when using Royal Mail distribution service; the majority are from Whiteley and Funtley. Although we send out Fareham Today to every household it is impossible to know how many residents actually read the paper copies.
11. In addition to the printed magazine, Fareham Today is also published on the Council's website. Each edition published on our website has on average around 1050 views. Fareport Talking News (FTN) also produce an audio version on behalf of the Council for people with hearing difficulties. We host this on our website and FTN distribute it to people who have signed up for their free service.

## RESOURCES NEEDED TO PRODUCE FAREHAM TODAY

12. Considerable resources are needed to create, publish and distribute each edition of Fareham Today.
13. **Staff Resources:** Officer time is taken up with planning, interviewing, visiting sites, writing articles and editing each edition. Each magazine takes approximately 10 weeks to produce. Work such as, liaising with officers, drafting articles, going out to interviews and site visits, designing layout, making amendments and proof reading is split up amongst the three members of the communications team. It takes around 185 officer hours to produce each edition.
14. **Financial Resources:** There are considerable financial costs involved in producing each edition of Fareham Today. The table below outlines the costs of producing recent editions of Fareham Today.

<b>Table 1: Fareham Today costs</b>	
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<b>Activity</b>	<b>Summer 2015</b>	<b>Winter 2015</b>	<b>Special Edition2015</b>	<b>Spring 2016</b>	<b>Summer 2016</b>
Graphic Design Services	£1,030	£725	£2,035	£725	£920
External Printing Services	£5,380	£5380	£5,380	£5,380	£5456
Royal Mail Distribution	£4,049	£4,049	£4,049	£4,134	£4,134
Direct Mail to 1789 addresses	£965	£965	£965	£965	£965
Record audio version	£66	£89	£89	£89	£80
Paid for back page advert	-£800	-£800	No advert in this edition	-£800	-£800
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,690</b>	<b>£10,408</b>	<b>£12,518</b>	<b>£10,493</b>	<b>£10,755</b>
<b>Total for 2015/16</b>				<b>£44,109</b>	

15. The costs for producing regular editions are generally consistent, although there is some variation in the cost of graphic design from issue to issue, depending on the amount of one off graphics needed, e.g. maps for walks. Special editions tend to be more expensive to create as they require more graphic design work to produce bespoke content within a relatively short space of time.
16. Taking the special edition out of the equation, the cost of producing Fareham Today in 2015/16 was £31,591.

### **A NEW WAY FORWARD**

17. Taking into account the changing way that people prefer to read and find out information, along with the need to make efficiency savings, it is proposed that the Council:
  18. Stops printing and distributing paper copies of Fareham Today to all of the Borough.
  19. Publishes smaller (10 pages long) but more regular online editions of Fareham Today six times a year on the Council's website.

20. Allows people to sign up to a mailing list if they require paper copies. The Council will then print and post paper copies to them. This will help ensure that people who do not have access to the internet or prefer print can still read the magazine in the way best suited to them.
21. Still provide the option to print and distribute to residents ad hoc special Fareham Today magazines on topics of Borough wide importance, similar to last year's Housing special edition of Fareham Today.
22. A limited number of printed magazines to be provided at the civic offices, libraries and community centres.
23. Continually monitor readership and review the success of the online edition approach after one year.

### **WHAT WOULD THE MAGAZINE BE LIKE?**

24. The new Fareham Today would generally be ten pages long and structured along the following format:
  - **Front page:** Logo, photo and what can be found inside.
  - **Page 1:** Introduction from the Leader and content.
  - **Page 2:** Events for your diary including town centre events
  - **Page 3:** Local story of interest or Council initiative
  - **Page 4:** Local story of interest or Council initiative
  - **Page 5:** Local story of interest or Council initiative
  - **Page 6:** Ferneham Hall
  - **Page 7:** Your Councillors
  - **Page 8:** Your Councillors
  - **Back page:** Paid for advert
25. The 'local story of interest or Council initiative' pages will cover many of the regular items found in the current Fareham Today, such as Meet the Mayor, Citizens of Honour, Fareham in Bloom, Access all Areas and the Annual Pantomime. There would also be items focused on areas of interest such as Daedalus, Welborne, consultations and other Council initiatives. Over the course of a year the number of pages produced would be the same as the current format of Fareham Today.
26. It is proposed that the annual rate for back page adverts, which is currently £2,400 a year, will stay the same. There would be an advert in every edition. Therefore, there would be adverts in six online editions per year, instead of the three paper editions currently advertised in, at no extra cost.
27. It is proposed that the new magazine will be published online six times a year in the following months:

- January
- March (before any pre-election period)
- May (after any pre-election period)
- July
- September
- November

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

28. The overall costs for producing each edition of the magazine will be reduced. However, some of the costs such as graphic design and the production of an audio version will stay roughly the same.
29. The costs associated with printing and providing paper versions of the magazines will be dependent on the number of people who sign up to the mailing list i.e. the more people who sign up to the mailing list the more expensive each edition will be.
30. Table 2 outlines the projected costs for the production of each edition dependent on the size of the mailing list as well as the cost per edition and year when compared to the costs outlined in Table 1.

**Table 2: Projected costs and saving dependent on size of mailing list**

Size of mailing list	Graphic Design costs	Audio Version	Printing Cost	Direct Mail Distribution Cost	Everyone Active advert	Total cost per issue	Cost per year (producing 6 editions)	Saving compared to 2015/16 costs
500	£400	£66	£125	£320	-£400	£511	£3,066	£28,525
1000	£400	£66	£190	£640	-£400	£896	£5,376	£26,215
2000	£400	£66	£320	£1280	-£400	£1,666	£9,997	£21,594

31. Staff numbers and the time involved in the production of the magazine will stay the same. However, resources will be spread out more evenly over the year.

### Benefits of this approach:

32. **Reduce costs:** By removing the need to print and distribute 51,000 copies every four months there would be a considerable cost saving.
33. **More timely editions and current stories:** By producing the magazine six times a year time-sensitive content, e.g. the 'what's on guide', would be more up-to-date and current.
34. **More responsive to emerging issues:** The greater number of editions and shorter time between each means that local issues or developments that sometime emerge quickly, e.g. large planning applications, can be covered in the magazine in a timely

way. At the moment, many of these stories are missed out as they don't fit in neatly with the current Fareham Today schedule.

35. **Residents who want a paper copy will still get them:** A small print run of each copy of the magazine would be mailed directly to residents who have signed up to a mailing list.
36. **Improved monitoring:** At the moment it is impossible to know how many people read the paper copies of Fareham Today. The new approach would allow us to monitor how many people are sent paper copies and the numbers of online views to give us overall readership figures.
37. **Flexibility to send special editions of the magazine to households if needed:** There may be issues of Borough wide importance that require a magazine to be sent to every household. This would still be possible on an ad hoc basis.
38. **More environmentally friendly:** Whilst Fareham Today is printed on recycled paper, each edition requires a number of trees to be cut down to produce it. An online version would therefore be more environmentally friendly.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

39. The content of Fareham Today does not replicate a Newspaper. Therefore, the Council's lawyers advise that the proposed increase in frequency of producing Fareham Today, is permitted within the Department for Communities and Local Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011).

## **MANAGING THE TRANSITION TO ONLINE**

40. It is proposed that the final paper edition of Fareham Today will be the spring 2017 magazine issued at the end of March 2017. In order to manage the transition the following actions are recommended:
41. The final Fareham Today to include a sign up form that residents could return to join the mailing list for paper copies of the magazine. Residents will also be offered the chance to sign up for an email alert with a link to the online magazine once it is published on the Council website. Similar information to be also sent out in the Council's Tenants' magazine.
42. Flyers to be sent to the Council's sheltered housing schemes informing residents how they can join the mailing list. The Council's public notice boards to also have details about how people can join.
43. Information on how to join the mailing list to be clearly displayed in the Civic Offices, where residents would also be able to sign up in person.
44. A press release would be issued promoting the new approach as well as informing residents of the rationale for change and how people can sign up to the mailing list.
45. Social media i.e. Facebook and twitter along with the homepage of the Council's website to be used to promote the online magazine and how people can sign up for paper copies.

## **CONCLUSION**



46. The approach outlined above should help ensure that Fareham Today successfully meets the needs of residents who prefer to read magazines and news online as well as those who prefer print editions. This will also allow considerable annual savings to be made.

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Roy Brown, Customer Engagement Manager (Ext 4409)