

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 March 2021

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Delegated

1 SCOPING REPORT OF COUNCIL MARKETING AND PROMOTION

To identify existing areas of marketing and promotion to support opportunities for improvement or best practice.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Marketing and promotion are recognised as a key function to enhance communication with residents. The growth in social media has perpetuated the need for information to be on-demand through Facebook and Twitter as well as via the website. There are also services across the Council that maintain the use of traditional marketing methods for certain specific activities when necessary.
- 1.1.2 Marketing and promotion and the timely supply of information is crucial in removing and managing demand on services. The Council needs to ensure that marketing and promotion is used tactically to deliver important messages, as well as to promote existing services and initiatives, ensuring maximum take up.

1.2 Overview of Existing Arrangements

- 1.2.1 Council Website: The Council website is undergoing review, with a relaunch planned for summer 2021. The new site offers greater marketing and promotion potential than the current site thanks to improved design and better functionality, including a single log-in for council tax accounts. The site is being designed to make it easier for residents to carry out online transactions and reduce paper billing.
- 1.2.2 Social Media: Online platforms are now the key channel for communicating with residents. Across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the council has around 12,000 followers. During 2020, more than 3,000 enquiries were handled and 28,000 content clicks generated. Improvements in published content, coupled with the impact of the pandemic, has seen significant growth in followers over the last 12 months, notably on Facebook which saw an increase of more than 60 per cent in 2020.

- 1.2.3 News Coverage: news coverage in the local media remains an important outlet for promotion, albeit with online outlets such as Kent Online superseding print in terms of reach and impact. A more proactive approach to media engagement has helped secure positive coverage around topics such as high street re-opening, the TMBC community hub and a 'shop local' campaign in December 2020.
- 1.2.4 Promotional Marketing/Tonbridge Castle: work to promote the Castle to wider audiences has been undertaken for several years. Options to consider different marketing channels would be beneficial, targeting people from outside the borough, marketing to schools, tour groups and other potential visitors as well as developing further options to maximise the Castle facilities.
- 1.2.5 Printed marketing materials: across the council, individual services largely design their own marketing materials, including leaflets, posters, reports and consultations. This does result in variations in style, quality and branding. The corporate brand guidelines have been updated to support the launch of the new website and may offer an opportunity to develop a more consistent approach in these and other areas.
- 1.2.6 Examples of printed materials include printed calendars and bin hangers with waste service information. The waste team have not issued printed calendars or bin hangers this year, initially because of Covid. Electronic versions are available on the website and the team email them to residents on request. This is likely to become a permanent change going forward, however there will still be occasions with round/service changes where letters/calendars will be issued to affected residents. Renewal letters are also sent out to garden waste participants, where there is no email address.
- 1.2.7 Poster sites: there are twelve poster sites around Tonbridge which are in continuous use by both the Council and community groups along with one poster site at West Malling (which is managed by the Parish Council). The poster sites are currently provided free of charge, Members may want to consider an administration fee, which would be in line with other districts who charge for this service? In addition, there are six very large poster sites at the roadside in Tonbridge. Consideration could be given to the current usage, the effectiveness of the poster sites and if any improvements could be made, such as investigating digital replacements for these sites.
- 1.2.8 Current areas of interest: Covid-19 response - inevitably, the pandemic has dominated the agenda since early 2020. Social media, news announcements, media interviews, emails to residents and posters have all been used to promote national messages to residents and to explain local policies and approaches. The current TMBC website has dedicated pages providing national guidance, information about how services are affected plus dedicated pages for business and community support. Overall public feedback has been positive.

1.3 Suggested focus for the next stage of the review

- 1.3.1 An audit of marketing/promotional budgets across the Council would establish the current cost and highlight any areas where efficiencies could be made. A full review of promotional spend may highlight activities that could either be altered or transferred to a more cost-effective media.
- 1.3.2 An assessment of all printed material to determine if these can be moved permanently to digital alternatives. This will need to be carefully considered as there will always be a percentage of residents who are not currently online and value paper formats. However, a move away from paper would be a more sustainable option and would help to achieve the Council's carbon reduction objectives.
- 1.3.3 A review of recent marketing and promotional materials would help to establish if there is consistency in style and branding. This could include in-house printed material such as posters and leaflets, as well as work and reports commissioned by the Council.
- 1.3.4 At present marketing and promotion across the Council is unaligned. Consideration should be given to a move to a structure with central oversight of all promotional/marketing material.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Budget allocations for marketing and promotions across all services to be assessed in full as part of the final review.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 N/A

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Communications
- 1.8.2 Customer Contact
- 1.8.3 Climate Change

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 That Members **ENDORSE** the approach as suggested in 1.3 of the report, to undertake the following further investigation:

- 1) An audit of marketing/promotional budgets across the Council to establish existing costs
- 2) Establish if paper forms of marketing/promotion need to continue, or if we can move away from paper entirely
- 3) An assessment of recent marketing/promotional items to ascertain the consistency of approach/branding
- 4) Consideration be given to a consolidated system, with central oversight of published material to ensure a consistent and professional approach

Background papers:

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Nil

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