

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

REVIEW OF COUNCIL MEDIA AND ADVERTISEMENTS ACTION PLAN

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To consider an action plan in response to the Economic Development and Corporate Issues Scrutiny Panel in relation to a review of council media and advertisements.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At its meeting held on 9 July 2008, cabinet considered a report of the Economic Development and Corporate Issues Scrutiny Panel in relation to a review of council media and advertisements.
- 2.2 The report containing five main recommendations was approved by cabinet and referred to the Service Director, Community Planning & Resources with a view to the preparation of an action plan.
- 2.3 After careful consideration of the evidence the panel concluded that the council should not seek advertisements placed in *Direct* and the website from private companies. The prime and over-arching role is to provide information about services and support the people of North Lincolnshire.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The panel noted the positive impact of *Direct* magazine issued to every home in North Lincolnshire. Research shows that 89 per cent of people read at least part of the magazine. It is held in high regard locally as a reliable source of council information.
- 3.2 The panel also acknowledged the high regard in which the council's website is held and growing importance as a key communications channel. In particular, the success of job recruitment for the council offering excellent value for money. And the Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM) rating the website as 'transactional' – the highest rating together with 'excellent' content.
- 3.3 The panel recommended that the website and *Direct* magazine should not carry any external advertising. Despite this, the panel believed as far as the website was concerned it would be foolish to rule out the option completely.
- 3.4 *Direct* magazine plays an important role in communicating council services and the area's shared ambitions. The council's resident survey (2006) shows

that *Direct* magazine is the main source of council information for almost four out of ten residents (38 per cent). The panel believed there are wider benefits to the community of allocating content to not for profit, public sector and voluntary sector organisations in the council's media.

- 3.5 Given the opportunities offered by changes in technology and advertising the panel will revisit the subject in 12 months' time. An action plan to take forward the panel's recommendations over the next 12 months is attached to this report.

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 To accept the action plan would support keeping an eye on web/media advertising and developing *Direct* magazine's potential for communicating the areas shared ambitions.
- 4.2 To not accept the action plan would deter progress on the issues raised by the panel.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial, staffing, property or IT implications arising from this action plan. However, the Digital Development Groups work will have a significant impact on decisions made on future investment in web technology and staffing.
- 5.2 There may be financial and staffing impact on content within *Direct* magazine promoting North Lincolnshire's shared ambitions on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Any changes to existing policies would require further detailed reports.

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 Diversity

6.1.1 Expanding the role of *Direct* magazine to formalise its use by other public sector and voluntary bodies will broaden its appeal. Content from such partners should enable greater amounts of useful information to be disseminated, particularly in the areas of health, social care and community safety. The result should be improved engagement and social cohesion, and wider uptake of services among hard-to-reach groups.

6.1.2 The council will also ensure that, should advertising be accepted on the website in future, the accessibility and usability of the site is not compromised by the amount, or the format, of advertising content. Future consultation on options for advertising in any council media must strive to engage as wide representative a sample of the community as possible.

- 6.2 There are no other considerations.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Consultations with appropriate officers and scrutiny panel members have taken place. A summary of comments (if any) will be circulated for cabinet members.

8 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That the action plan attached to this report is approved.

SERVICE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITY PLANNING & RESOURCES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Cabinet paper 9 July 2008 enclosing Report of the Economic Development & Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee on the review of council media and advertisements.
Residents survey (BVPI 2006) – Question 25 - How do you find out about North Lincolnshire Council?

EXECUTIVE ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT

REPORT TITLE: REVIEW OF COUNCIL MEDIA AND ADVERTISEMENTS

DATE 4 SEPTEMBER 2008

INITIAL CONSIDERATION BY CABINET 17 SEPTEMBER

RECOMMENDATIONS	CABINET MEMBER/OFFICER RESPONSIBILITY AND DESCRIPTION OF ACTION TO BE TAKEN (GIVE REASONS IF NO ACTION TO BE TAKEN)	EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE
1. That ongoing and co-ordinated support be given to the work of the Digital Development Group.	Corporate Affairs Cabinet Member/Deputy Chief Executive – Individuals/Strategic Marketing Manager The group continue leading website digital development reporting to CMT. The group to produce a vision statement and an action plan for strategic change and investment.	Report to CMT March 2009.	March 2009.
2. The council should not pursue non-council web based advertisements based on current public perception.	Corporate Affairs Cabinet Member/Strategic Marketing Manager. To repeat consultation exercise to gauge public perception about the website carrying commercial advertising.	Report outcomes of consultation to Scrutiny.	July 2009
3. Discussions with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) continue, and the position be reviewed by June 2009, taking into account income levels and website satisfaction levels.	Corporate Affairs Cabinet Member/Strategic Marketing Manager. There is no evidence from local government that advertising revenues are feasible. LCC are the first council to adopt this approach and other councils are following. The council needs to keep this under review. Maintain dialogue with LCC every three months to review impact of website advertising.	Report LCC outcomes to Scrutiny.	July 2009
4. <i>Direct</i> magazine should not carry commercial advertisements.	Corporate Affairs Cabinet Member/Publications Manager. Commercial advertising space taken in <i>Direct</i> magazine would be at the expense of council services. <i>Direct's</i> role is to increase awareness of the council and its services, and increasingly local public services as a result of partnership working and the Local Area Agreement. To repeat consultation exercise to gauge public perception about <i>Direct</i> carrying commercial advertising.	Report outcomes of consultation to Scrutiny.	July 2009

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<p>5. A more co-ordinated and inclusive approach to utilising council media is adopted, seeking guidance from relevant bodies if required.</p>	<p>Corporate Affairs Cabinet Member/Publications Manager. To engage with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) on options for changing the contribution of public sector partners and their editorial input into <i>Direct</i> magazine to improve its role as a vehicle for partnership communications. Produce an options paper to be presented to members of the LSP in September 2008.</p>	<p>Report progress of decision outcomes from LSP to Scrutiny.</p>	<p>January 2009</p>