

Local Media

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The relationship between councils and local media is vital for the health of our democracy. The government is currently consulting on a new Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, intended to replace the existing codes for local authorities in England. The existing codes are almost 25 years old and the LG Group is pleased that the government is reviewing them. However, we believe that the proposed code of practice is entirely at odds with the government's commitment to localism and would place severe restrictions on the ability of local authorities to communicate with their residents about vital public services.

Recommendation

Members are asked to give a steer on any further lobbying actions.

Action

Subject to Members' comments, officers to take forward suggested actions.

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Background

1. The relationship between councils and local media is vital for the health of our democracy. Councils want to see a successful and vibrant local media. It is essential that journalists scrutinise the workings of councils and help to hold elected representatives to account.
2. The government is currently consulting on a new Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, intended to replace the existing codes for local authorities in England. The preamble to the draft code is attached at **Annex A** and the full code can be viewed at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1727384.pdf>
3. The existing codes are almost 25 years old and the LG Group is pleased that the government is reviewing them. We also support the proposed “seven principles”, which reflect how councils have managed their publicity for many years. These are that local authority publicity should:
 - 3.1 Be lawful
 - 3.2 Be cost effective
 - 3.3 Be objective
 - 3.4 Be even-handed
 - 3.5 Be appropriate
 - 3.6 Have regard to equality and diversity
 - 3.7 Be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity
4. However, we believe that many of the subsequent proposals are entirely at odds with the government’s commitment to localism that has been clearly evident in many other policy areas. If enacted, they would place severe restrictions on the ability of local authorities to communicate with their residents about vital public services.
5. This reports sets out our fundamental concerns in relation to local media under three headings: local newspapers, statutory notices and lobbying. Further detail on this, and supporting evidence, can be found in the full LG Group response to the consultation, which is attached at **Annex B**.

Local newspapers

6. The Coalition Agreement contained a commitment that the Government would “impose tougher rules to stop unfair competition by local authority newspapers”. The proposed code will, according to the preamble to the consultation draft, “contain specific guidance on the frequency, content and appearance of local authority newspapers and magazines”.
7. We agree that councils “should not publish newsletters, newssheets or similar communications which seek to emulate commercial newspapers in style or content” but the LG Group strongly opposes the notion that central government should tell locally elected representatives how often they should communicate with the people who elected them and what this communication should look like.
8. 92% of councils produce their own newsletter. They do so to communicate with the public about essential services, such as opening times for popular services like libraries, information about activities provided by the council like activities for children, details about consultations with residents around issues such as road closures, and useful contact numbers. There is a clear need for this – two-thirds of the public know nothing or next to nothing about the 800 different services councils provide. This is not conducive to a healthy democracy, and is a major barrier to enabling the Big Society vision of local people taking a more active role in the designing and delivery of the services they consume. One of the ways councils have tried to rectify this disconnect is through producing a newsletter.
9. Neither do we believe that local authority newsletters are unfairly competing with the local press. Our research has shown that the most popular frequency was quarterly (36%) and that around a third of local authority publications (33.7%) do not carry any advertising at all. One fifth (19.9%) of councils reported that adverts made up less than 10% of overall content.
10. Councils will continue to support the presence of an active and investigative local media, but we cannot escape the reality that many newspapers have been cutting the number of journalists they employ, reducing their presence in communities, and not attending council meetings. We believe it is legitimate, during a time when many local newspapers are not providing coverage of the democratic process, for councils to communicate directly with residents about decisions and services.

Statutory notices

11. Outdated legislation requires councils to pay local newspapers to print certain statutory public notices – a list is attached at **Annex C**. This is a cost councils simply cannot afford. And in the 21st century newspapers are no longer always

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the cheapest and most effective way of communicating on a mass scale. Although the preamble to the proposed code states that “over time, commercial newspapers should expect less state advertising as more information is syndicated on-line” we believe the code is a missed opportunity for the government to overhaul an archaic and, more importantly, costly burden on councils.

12. LGA research shows that an average council has to pay its local newspaper £105,000 per year to print public notices which are routinely published online and circulated in council newsletters¹. Last year, one large local authority had to pay out £608,000 to meet its legal duty to advertise statutory notices.
13. We estimate that local authorities spend around £40 million a year on statutory planning notices alone. The enforced advertising of these notices in local papers could instead pay for the construction of 2,180 new council homes, pay the annual salaries of another 3,000 care workers or employ an extra 2,000 refuse collectors to empty people’s bins.
14. The London Borough of Camden saw an 80% reduction in its advertising and publication costs after Parliament granted an exemption to its duty to advertise in the local press in 2004². The savings were channelled into programmes to help disadvantaged groups. Subsequent research showed that putting resources into other forms of communication had helped to get more people involved in commenting on planning matters.

Lobbying

15. We disagree with the suggestion in the draft code that councils “should not incur any expenditure in retaining the services of private specialists, contractors or consultants”. Clearly it would be inappropriate for councils to spend money on lobbyists when their in-house communications staff could do a similar job, and all authorities should demonstrate that the use of external providers passes a value for money test. Bringing in expertise to work on a specific project – e.g. to campaign for local transport improvements – can result in significant economic benefits for an area, and is often cheaper than employing staff directly.

¹ A total of 204 local authorities responded to the LGA survey conducted over August and September 2010. Of those, 49 provided figures for the amount spent on advertising statutory notices. The average spent by a local authority on advertising statutory notices each year was £105,000. The highest amount spent was £608,000. Three councils spent between £400,000 and £475,000, one each spent £300,000, £250,000 and £200,000, five spent in excess of £100,000 and five spent exactly £100,000.

² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/doc/1309740.doc>

Conclusion and next steps

16. The LGA has repeatedly made the case to government to give democratically elected councillors the freedom to decide what is the most effective way to communicate with the people they represent. In addition to our response to the proposed publicity code, recent actions include:

16.1 Highlighting our key messages on local media in meetings with CLG Ministers

16.2 Highlighting the removal of the requirement to advertise planning applications in local papers as one of our 'top 5' suggestions to government on how to reduce the burden on councils

16.3 Supporting a short-listed Sustainable Communities Act proposal to reform the rules governing Statutory Notices

Members are asked to give a steer on any further lobbying actions.

17. In particular, the LGA will be lobbying for key amendments to the Localism and Decentralisation Bill. This is an agenda item at the December LG Group Executive, and the Board might like to recommend that repealing the requirement to publish certain statutory notices in local newspapers is one of the amendments.

Financial Implications

18. None.

**Annex A – Preamble to Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority
Publicity, Communities and Local Government**

1. The Government is consulting on a new Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity ('the proposed Code'), intended to replace the existing Codes for local authorities in England. A draft of the proposed Code is attached and your comments would be welcomed.

Why we are consulting

2. The Coalition Agreement, Our Programme for Government, contains the commitment that the Government 'will impose tougher rules to stop unfair competition by local authority newspapers'. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has made it clear that the existing rules on local authority publicity have resulted in taxpayers' money being wasted and the free press being undermined. He would like to see less local authority resource being expended on local authority newspapers, with it being focused on frontline services instead.
3. The Secretary of State considers that, over time, commercial newspapers should expect less state advertising as more information is syndicated online for free, but at the same time the free press should not face competition from a local authority publication passing itself off as a newspaper.
4. In addition, the Secretary of State is concerned at the use of lobbyists by local authorities. The Secretary of State is clear that local authorities do not need lobbyists to get their point across to Government. If local politicians want to change the way Government operates, they can write or pick up the phone. In addition, councillors can campaign for change at a personal or party political level. There is no need for lobbyists.
5. Councillors lobbying Members of Parliament or Government Ministers is wholly legitimate. Meetings between politicians are matters of public record and where public bodies engage with Government there is transparency as these matters are subject to Freedom of Information Act requests. Lobbyists, as private organisations, are subject to none of these rules. Taxpayers' money should not be spent on lobbyists with no public accountability.
6. By the same measure, local authorities should not have stalls at party conferences with the aim of lobbying Government. It may be legitimate for a local authority to have a stall promoting a particular service, such as a conference centre, just as it would at a trade show. However, the Government considers that it is not an appropriate use of public funds for a council to have a stall at a conference with the aim of lobbying for, for instance, extra resource from central Government.

Local authority publicity

7. Effective communication is key to developing understanding of issues at a local level and in recent years local authorities have used local publicity not just to

inform the public about council services but also to encourage greater participation. Good, effective publicity, aimed at improving public awareness of the councils' activities is quite acceptable.

8. However, publicity is a sensitive matter because of the impact it can have and because of the costs associated with it, which can be considerable. It is essential, therefore, to ensure that decisions about local authority publicity are properly made. The stated underlying objective of the proposed Code is to ensure the proper use of public funds for publicity but it also provides guidance on content, dissemination and timing.

What we are proposing

9. The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity is currently contained in two separate circulars, the original one from 1988 (Department of the Environment: Circular 20/88) being revised in 2001 (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions: Circular 06/2001) to update the rules for county councils, district councils and London borough councils in England.
10. The proposed new Code is a significant restructuring of the existing Codes, which are to be replaced. The guidance is now grouped into seven principles that require local authority publicity to be lawful, cost effective, objective, even-handed, appropriate, to have regard to equality and diversity, and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity. The proposed Code is also a single instrument rather than two circulars each addressing different tiers of local government.
11. To give effect to the Government's commitment to stop unfair competition by local authority newspapers, the proposed Code will contain specific guidance on the frequency, content and appearance of local authority newspapers or magazines. They must not appear more frequently than once a quarter, must only include material that is directly related to the business, services or amenities of the authority or other local service providers and should be clearly marked as being published by the local authority. These provisions also extend to web-based editions of publications.
12. The provision relating to the prohibition on the use of lobbyists appears in the proposed Code as a consideration that the use of lobbyists is related to the use of publicity, in that it is one of the methods by which authorities might spend taxpayers' money to influence people one way or another in relation to political issues. It is therefore within the general ambit of the code of practice.
13. Comments are invited on the draft code. In particular:
Do the seven principles of local authority publicity as laid down in the Code encompass the full scope of the guidance required by local authorities?

Do you believe that the proposed revised Code will impose sufficiently tough rules to stop unfair competition by local authority newspapers?

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Does the proposed Code enable local authorities to provide their communities with the information local people need at any time?

Is the proposed Code sufficiently clear to ensure that any inappropriate use of lobbyists, or stalls at party conferences, is clearly ruled out?

Annex B – LGA response to Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity Local Government Association Response

The LGA is a voluntary membership body and our 422 member authorities cover every part of England and Wales. Together they represent over 50 million people and spend around £113 billion a year on local services. They include county councils, metropolitan district councils, English unitary authorities, London boroughs and shire district councils, along with fire authorities, police authorities, national park authorities and passenger transport authorities.

1. The LGA is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We believe that now, almost 25 years on from when the original code was introduced, is an appropriate time to judge whether the current guidelines are fit for purpose given the fundamental changes in communications that have occurred over that time. It is also appropriate, particularly in the current financial climate, that the public has confidence in how money is spent on publicity. The LGA is supportive of the Government's attempts to encourage greater transparency across the public sector.
2. The seven principles in paragraph 4 of the draft code reflect the manner in which authorities have managed their publicity for many years, and are sensible in their nature. However we are concerned about the wording of many of the subsequent clauses.
3. Most local authorities produce their own newsletter, and do so as a means of communicating with the public about services. Our research – attached as a technical annex to this response – shows that 92 per cent of councils do so.
4. Councils provide around 800 different services, but independent research by IpsosMori has shown that two-thirds of the public know nothing or next to nothing about local government³. This is a fundamentally unhealthy situation in a modern democracy, and one of the ways councils have tried to rectify this disconnect is through producing a newsletter.
5. Local authority publications provide basic information about how to access services and inform residents about how their council tax is being spent. A typical newsletter will include content such as opening times for popular services like libraries, information about activities provided by the council like activities for children, details about consultations with residents around issues such as road closures, and useful contact numbers.
6. Much media attention has been focused on councils that produce weekly newspapers, and the impact this has had on the local press. It is important to put this debate into context. Our research found that less than one per cent of

³ IpsosMori – *The Business Case for the Reputation Project 2005*

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authorities produce a weekly newsletter, and that the most popular frequency was quarterly (36 per cent). The survey also found that only three per cent of councils produce a fortnightly publication. We therefore believe that the allegation local authority newsletters are unfairly competing with the local press is unfounded.

7. The difficulties facing local newspapers have been well documented. The growth of the internet, and a sharp decline in advertising revenue, have hit the industry hard. Councils are concerned about this, and want to see a successful and vibrant local media. It is essential for local democracy that journalists scrutinise the workings of councils and help hold elected representatives to account. There are numerous examples of where local authorities have taken action to help their local papers stay afloat (see technical annex). Some councils have contracts with the local paper to print their newsletter, and many have sponsored campaigns.
8. It has been suggested that council newsletters have been competitors with the local media for advertising revenue. Our research does not suggest this is the case. Around a third of local authority publications (33.7 per cent) do not carry any advertising at all, and one fifth (19.9 per cent) of councils reported that adverts made up less than 10 per cent of overall content.
9. Councils will continue to support the presence of an active and investigative local media, but we cannot escape the reality that many newspapers have been cutting the number of journalists they employ, reducing their presence in communities, and not attending council meetings. We believe it is legitimate, during a time when many local newspapers are not providing coverage of the democratic process, for councils to communicate directly with residents about decisions and services.
10. Local government spends a substantial amount of money on advertising in local newspapers. We estimate that councils spend around £40 million a year on statutory planning notices alone. The enforced advertising of these notices in local papers could instead pay for the construction of 2,180 new council homes, pay the annual salaries of another 3,000 care workers or employ an extra 2,000 refuse collectors to empty people's bins. We believe these rules – which predate the advent of the internet – should be brought up to date. Councils, in consultation with residents, should be able to decide how best to keep people informed while ensuring they get the best value for money.
11. In addition to the amount spent on statutory notices, councils choose to place other advertisements, principally for events or job vacancies, in the local media. Our research shows that one county council spent more than £1.1 million on adverts – excluding the cost of statutory notices. Councils spent an average of £181,000 each in the last financial year. We estimate this amounts to £67.85 million across the whole sector. This is money that local authorities decided to spend with their local newspapers, and is a significant contributor to the industry's turnover.
12. We agree that councils 'should not publish newsletters, newssheets or similar communications which seek to emulate commercial newspapers in style or content'. However, we do not believe that the proposal to restrict the appearance of council

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publications to once a quarter will do anything to help local newspapers. In some cases, it could have the opposite effect as the local newspaper is the printer and distributor of the council publication.

13. According to our research, the quarterly cap would affect roughly one in five local authorities. The Secretary of State has said he would like to see resources being focused on frontline services instead of the production of newspapers, but there is ample evidence to suggest these restrictions could ultimately be more expensive. Three quarters of authorities who responded to our survey believe a reduction in the number of newsletters they are allowed to produce will result in them having to print more leaflets – or other direct mailings to communicate with their residents. This is not a position any council would want to find itself in. One authority told the LGA: “The cost of publishing additional documents and distributing them separately - to plug the gaps left by reducing from six to four editions per year - would be significant. Equally, the cost of advertising in enough local newspapers to reach the entire population would also be significant.”
14. An increasing number of councils now join up with other public services – in particular the police and the health service – to allow them to use the pages of their newsletter. A restriction on how often they can appear could subsequently mean other public bodies also having to spend more money on other forms of communication. Most councils also allow their newsletters to be used as a free platform for voluntary and community groups to communicate with local people.
15. Newsletters delivered to people’s homes are the most cost effective way a local authority is guaranteed to communicate directly with their residents. As Cllr Gerald Vernon Jackson, a deputy chairman of the LGA and the leader of Portsmouth Council, put it when giving evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee last year: “We do five or six *Flagships* a year, which costs £45,000 of public money; we spend £970,000 a year advertising in our local paper (so £970,000 of public support for a private newspaper in Portsmouth), but it still only gets to 30,000 houses out of the 85,000 people who live in Portsmouth. There are some things that they do very well, and we work extremely closely with them, but sometimes we need different forms where we are guaranteed of getting it through everybody's letter-box, which not all papers are able to do.”⁴ Our survey showed the average cost of producing a council newsletter was £81,000 over the financial year 2009/10
16. We believe the most appropriate way of regulating local authority publications is for the sector to put forward its own code of conduct. We therefore support the proposals submitted to this consultation for such a code by LGCommunications.
17. The previous code of practice contained provision for councils ‘to explain or justify the council's policies either in general, as in the annual report, or on specific topics, for example as background to consultation on the line chosen for a new road.’ We note the new draft code does not refer to local authorities being allowed to explain or justify their decisions. Councils are elected to take decisions on behalf of their

⁴ LGA oral evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport inquiry, *Future for Local and Regional Media*, 27 October 2009

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communities. Sometimes those decisions will be difficult or controversial, and we believe it is an integral part of a local authority's job to explain and justify them. The proposed provisions of the code are therefore against the spirit of democratic public decision making in principle – and in practice are likely to weaken the ability to deliver good government.

18. Paragraph 16 of the draft code states that councils 'should ensure that publicity relating to their own policies and proposals are not designed to be (or are not likely to be interpreted as) aimed at influencing the public's opinion about the policies of the authority.' This implies that elected local authorities cannot justify their own decisions when communicating with the public. Councils have a duty to provide information about services, but also a democratic responsibility to explain to their electorate the actions taken on their behalf.
19. A number of councils have expressed concerns about the wording of part of Paragraph 20, which states: 'Local authorities should ensure that publicity of the work done by individual members of the authority does not publicise solely the work of councillors holding executive positions, or who belong to the political group which controls the authority.' We believe council staff should be able to communicate the corporate objectives of an organisation provided it is done at all times with regard to the Local Government Act and its limitations around political impartiality.
20. We disagree with the suggestion in Paragraph 26 that councils 'should not incur any expenditure in retaining the services of private specialists, contractors or consultants'. Clearly it would be inappropriate for councils to spend money on lobbyists when their in-house communications staff could do a similar job, and all authorities should demonstrate that the use of external providers passes a value for money test. Bringing in expertise to work on a specific project – e.g. to campaign for local transport improvements – can result in significant economic benefits for an area, and is often cheaper than employing staff directly. Similarly, we do not understand why there is the need for regulation to determine what presence a council should have at party political conferences (Paragraph 27). This should not be the concern of central government.
21. We agree with the point in Paragraph 30 which states that local authority publicity 'should clearly and unambiguously identify itself as a product of the local authority'.
22. To sum up, the Coalition Government has shown a strong commitment to localism since coming to power. The LGA is pleased at some of the steps ministers have taken towards devolving power and decision making, and the move away from the 'Whitehall knows best' attitude. We strongly agreed with the Secretary of State, in one of his first speeches after taking office, when he said that "localism is the principle, the mantra and defines everything we do... No one working in local government signed up to be told what to do for the rest of their lives by Whitehall."⁵ We believe that this code of practice is entirely at odds with those principles and

⁵ *Eric Pickles speech to Queen's Speech Forum, 11 June 2010*

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would place severe restrictions on the ability of local authorities to communicate with their residents about vital public services.

Report of the local authority newsletter/magazine survey 2010

The survey was sent to heads of communication at all 375 local authorities in England and Wales on 24th August 2010 by email, and by 17th September, 204 authorities (54.4%) had responded. The tables below summarise the findings by type of authority.

Response by type of authority was as follows:

Authority Type	No.	%
County	12	3.2 %
District	112	29.9 %
London Borough	23	6.1 %
Metropolitan District	19	5.1 %
Unitary	38	10.1 %
All	204	54.4 %

Summary findings

Almost all respondent authorities (91.7%) currently produced a newsletter or magazine.

Of the small number which didn't, just under two thirds (64.7%) had produced one within the last five years and the main reason given for stopping was cost (69.2% of those which had stopped).

Does your authority currently produce a magazine or newsletter?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	187	91.7	11	91.7	103	92.0	21	91.3	17	89.5	35	92.1
No	17	8.3	1	8.3	9	8.0	2	8.7	2	10.5	3	7.9
All	204	100.0	12	100.0	112	100.0	23	100.0	19	100.0	38	100.0

Base: 204 authorities

Almost all of the respondents with newsletters (92.4%) produced their newsletter up to six times a year, with half (48.4%) producing it either three or four times a year.

Does your authority currently produce a magazine or newsletter?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Weekly	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Every two weeks	6	3.3	0	0.0	1	1.0	4	20.0	0	0.0	1	3.0
Monthly	7	3.8	0	0.0	1	1.0	3	15.0	1	5.9	2	6.1
Every two months	27	14.7	0	0.0	8	7.8	2	10.0	7	41.2	10	30.3
Quarterly	67	36.4	8	72.7	39	37.9	3	15.0	7	41.2	10	30.3

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More expensive	2	66.7	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
About the same	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Less expensive	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't know	1	33.3	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	3	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0

Base: 3 authorities which produced more direct mailings as a result of reducing the frequency of their newsletter

Three quarters of the authorities who had not reduced the frequency (76.1%) thought that reducing it would result in them having to produce more direct mailings.

If not reduced, do you think that if you were to reduce the frequency this would result in your authority having to produce more leaflets or other direct mailings?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	108	76.1	4	50.0	56	71.8	15	93.8	8	66.7	25	89.3
No	15	10.6	0	0.0	12	15.4	0	0.0	1	8.3	2	7.1
Don't know	19	13.4	4	50.0	10	12.8	1	6.3	3	25.0	1	3.6
Total	142	100.0	8	100.0	78	100.0	16	100.0	12	100.0	28	100.0

Base: 142 authorities which had not reduced the frequency of their newsletter

Almost all of the authorities who thought that reducing the frequency would result in them having to produce more direct mailings (92.5%) also thought that this would be more expensive than producing their newsletter.

Overall, do you think that producing these leaflets or other direct mailings would be more or less expensive than producing your magazine/newsletter more frequently?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
More expensive	90	84.1	1	25.0	48	85.7	11	78.6	7	87.5	23	92.0
About the same	9	8.4	2	50.0	3	5.4	1	7.1	1	12.5	2	8.0
Less expensive	4	3.7	0	0.0	2	3.6	2	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't know	4	3.7	1	25.0	3	5.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	107	100.0	4	100.0	56	100.0	14	100.0	8	100.0	25	100.0

Base: 107 authorities who thought that they would have to produce more direct mailings as a result of reducing the frequency of their newsletter

On average, each authority producing a newsletter employed the equivalent of just over one full-time person to produce it.

Approximately how many staff are employed to produce the magazine/newsletter?						
	All Authorities	Counties	Districts	London Boroughs	Metropolitan Districts	Unitaries

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FTE Average	1.0	0.7	0.9	2.0	1.1	1.1
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Base: 161 authorities

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	6	3.6	0	0.0	4	4.2	0	0.0	2	12.5	0	0.0
Total	167	100.0	8	100.0	95	100.0	17	100.0	16	100.0	31	100.0

The average cost of producing a newsletter was £81,000 over the financial year 2009/10

Approximately how many staff are employed to produce the magazine/newsletter?						
	All Authorities	Counties	Districts	London Boroughs	Metropolitan Districts	Unitaries
FTE Average	£81,000	£266,000	£34,000	£236,000	£124,000	£72,000

Base: 157 authorities

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	6	3.7		0.0	3	3.2	1	6.3	1	6.7	1	3.2
Total	163	100.0	8	100.0	93	100.0	16	100.0	15	100.0	31	100.0

One third of respondents (33.7%) had no advertisements in their newsletters and one fifth (19.9%) reported that adverts comprised less than 10% of the publication.

Approximately what proportion of the magazine/newsletter comprises advertisements?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
None	56	33.7	1	12.5	37	39.4	2	11.8	6	37.5	10	32.3
Less than 10%	33	19.9	3	37.5	19	20.2	3	17.6	5	31.3	3	9.7
10% - 19%	29	17.5	1	12.5	16	17.0	5	29.4	2	12.5	5	16.1
20% - 29%	30	18.1	1	12.5	16	17.0	3	17.6	2	12.5	8	25.8
30% - 39%	13	7.8	1	12.5	5	5.3	3	17.6	1	6.3	3	9.7
40% - 49%	4	2.4	1	12.5	1	1.1	1	5.9	0	0.0	1	3.2
50% or more	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.2
Don't know	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	166	100.0	8	100.0	94	100.0	17	100.0	16	100.0	31	100.0

Base: 166 authorities which currently produce a newsletter/magazine

Two fifths of respondents (42%) did not receive any advertising revenue over 2009/10. Those which did received, on average, £61,000. The average revenue across all authorities, including those not receiving any, was £33,000.

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How much revenue did advertising bring in over the financial year 2009/10?						
	All Authorities	Counties	Districts	London Boroughs	Metropolitan Districts	Unitaries
Average Revenue (>0)	£61,000	£53,000	£9,000	£229,000	£16,000	£50,000
Average Revenue (all)	£33,000	£45,000	£4,000	£215,000	£8,000	£28,000

Base: 83 authorities receiving advertising revenue/151 authorities including those receiving no revenue

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No advertising revenue	68	42.0	1	12.5	47	51.6	1	5.9	7	46.7	12	38.7
Don't know	11	6.8	1	12.5	5	5.5	1	5.9		0.0	4	12.9
Total	162	100.0	8	100.0	91	100.0	17	100.0	15	100.0	31	100.0

Over four-fifths of respondents (84.1%) said they produced a newsletter (rather than relying solely on other forms of local media) because it reached more households than the local newspapers, and over a half (57.4%) did so because of cost/value for money. The other main reasons were no single local newspaper covering the whole geographic area of the council (51.1%) and quality (30.1%).

Why does your authority produce a magazine/newsletter rather than rely solely on other forms of local media?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Cost/value for money	101	57.4	4	40.0	52	53.6	14	66.7	9	52.9	22	66.7
Timeliness	24	13.6	0	0.0	11	11.3	7	33.3	1	5.9	5	15.2
In-house magazine /newsletter is better quality than local newspapers	53	30.1	2	20.0	28	28.9	6	28.6	5	29.4	12	36.4
No single local newspaper covers whole geographic area of the council	90	51.1	5	50.0	53	54.6	10	47.6	8	47.1	14	42.4
Reaches more households than the local newspapers	148	84.1	8	80.0	82	84.5	15	71.4	14	82.4	29	87.9
Lack of local newspapers	13	7.4	1	10.0	8	8.2	3	14.3	1	5.9	0	0.0
Ability to include factual council information	52	29.5	2	20.0	30	30.9	5	23.8	7	41.2	8	24.2
Other reasons	21	11.9	1	10.0	13	13.4	2	9.5	0	0.0	5	15.2
Don't know	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.0

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Total	176	100.0	10	100.0	97	100.0	21	100.0	17	100.0	33	100.0
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Base: 176 authorities which currently produce a newsletter/magazine

The other reasons provided for the authority producing a magazine/newsletter rather than rely solely on other forms of local media were as follows.

- All local media channels are downsizing so opportunities for us to get our information out without using our own channels are diminishing.
- Also have a commitment as part of Reputation Campaign
- Best practice
- Create better recognised vehicle to get key council messages across
- Direct communication with residents and businesses
- Hugely diverse community requires regular information about services
- It is the way our residents say they prefer to receive information from the council (BVPI/LPSA/Place Survey)
- It's proven to be one of the two most effective ways of communicating with our residents. Of those who read it 93% say it is informative
- Lack of internet use by large number of our population means limited online engagement. Also our residents tell us they want information on services direct from the council.
- LGA Reputation campaign, only way to communicate directly en-masse
- Most cost effective direct communications and residents want to receive direct mailings about services from us (survey results)
- Need direct contact with information on services - goes to every household guaranteed
- Our residents expressed preference to get info on council services direct through their door in a number of surveys
- Residents have identified through independent survey that they prefer to receive council information via the magazine.
- We get it for free in a deal reached with our LSP
- We include news from partners e.g. vol orgs, Police, Education, Health
- We know from research that people read it and it helps satisfaction levels/perceived value for money

Almost all respondents (91.3%) produce their own newsletter rather than having a contract with a local newspaper to do it for them.

Do you have a contract with a local newspaper for them to produce your magazine/newsletter?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	12	7.5	0	0.0	3	3.3	1	6.3	2	13.3	6	20.0
No	146	91.3	8	100.0	86	94.5	15	93.8	13	86.7	24	80.0
Don't know	2	1.3	0	0.0	2	2.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	160	100.0	8	100.0	91	100.0	16	100.0	15	100.0	30	100.0

Base: 160 authorities which currently produce a newsletter/magazine

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Almost all respondents producing a newsletter had a local newspaper operated in their area by one of the six main newspaper groups. However, as the survey did not ask where none of them were operating it is not possible to give an exact percentage figure.

Which of the following groups operate the newspapers in which you place your statutory notices?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Archant	24	11.9	3	25.0	13	11.6	6	26.1	0	0.0	2	5.6
Johnston Press	42	20.8	3	25.0	30	26.8	0	0.0	5	26.3	4	11.1
Newsquest Media Group	53	26.2	2	16.7	28	25.0	8	34.8	5	26.3	10	27.8
Northcliffe	37	18.3	0	0.0	25	22.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	33.3
Tindle Newspapers	8	4.0	0	0.0	4	3.6	2	8.7	0	0.0	2	5.6
Trinity Mirror	37	18.3	3	25.0	14	12.5	3	13.0	8	42.1	9	25.0
Other	34	16.8	1	8.3	20	17.9	4	17.4	3	15.8	6	16.7
Don't know	12	5.9	2	16.7	5	4.5	3	13.0	2	10.5	0	0.0
Total	202	100.0	12	100.0	112	100.0	23	100.0	19	100.0	36	100.0

Base: 202 authorities

On average, authorities spent £105,000 on statutory notices placed in local newspapers over the financial year 2009/10.

How much did your authority spend on statutory notices placed in local newspapers over the financial year 2009/10?						
	All Authorities	Counties	Districts	London Boroughs	Metropolitan Districts	Unitaries
FTE Average	£105,000	£383,000	£46,000	£84,000	£210,000	£143,000

Base: 49 authorities

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	120	71.0	5	71.4	73	75.3	11	61.1	11	68.8	20	64.5
Total	169	100.0	7	100.0	97	100.0	18	100.0	16	100.0	31	100.0

This compared to overall spending on advertising in local newspapers (excluding statutory notices) of £181,000 on average over the financial year 2009/10.

And how much did your authority spend overall on advertising in local newspapers (excluding statutory notices) over the financial year 2009/10?						
	All Authorities	Counties	Districts	London Boroughs	Metropolitan Districts	Unitaries
FTE Average	£181,000	£1,144,000*	£53,000	£57,000	£615,000	£174,000

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Base: 49 authorities

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	120	71.0	6	85.7	73	75.3	10	55.6	11	68.8	20	64.5
Total	169	100.0	7	100.0	97	100.0	18	100.0	16	100.0	31	100.0

* Based on only one authority therefore should not be quoted

One tenth of authorities (11.8%) have taken action to help local newspapers in trouble

Has your authority taken any action to help local newspapers in trouble?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	20	11.8	0	0.0	11	11.3	0	0.0	2	12.5	7	22.6
No	139	82.2	5	71.4	83	85.6	17	94.4	13	81.3	21	67.7
Don't know	10	5.9	2	28.6	3	3.1	1	5.6	1	6.3	3	9.7
Total	169	100.0	7	100.0	97	100.0	18	100.0	16	100.0	31	100.0

Base: 169 authorities

Almost three-quarters of authorities (73.4%) have worked with local newspapers in other ways.

Has your authority worked with local newspapers, either successfully or otherwise, in any other way?												
	All Authorities		Counties		Districts		London Boroughs		Metropolitan Districts		Unitaries	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	113	73.4	5	71.4	65	74.7	11	68.8	11	78.6	21	70.0
No	23	14.9	1	14.3	13	14.9	2	12.5	1	7.1	6	20.0
Don't know	18	11.7	1	14.3	9	10.3	3	18.8	2	14.3	3	10.0
Total	154	100.0	7	100.0	87	100.0	16	100.0	14	100.0	30	100.0

Base: 169 authorities

Authorities who had worked with their local newspapers were asked to provide details, these are listed below.

- A challenging relationship with one of the local newspapers has resulted in a new, more positive and community-focussed publication from the same group following work by officers and Cabinet members.
- Archant and other newspaper titles in Norfolk are strong and vibrant newspapers and we do much work in partnership with them, including support and sponsorship of their annual 'Big Month', media partnerships around the Norfolk leg of The Tour of Britain, this September and a partnership with Archant and Norwich City Football Club 'Play 90' which aims to get every school child in Norfolk to commit to 90 minutes of exercise a day.
- Building a strong rapport, providing proactive opportunities for them to attend briefings to get a variety of stories in one hit as know that reporter

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numbers are down as media groups reorganise. We also take photos of media calls and share images among groups without a photographer on certain days. We fully recognise the worth and role of local papers and other local media.

- Campaign/partnership activity. Regularly meeting with advertising directors to discuss changes to their business models and how we can support them to the benefit of residents. Working with editorial teams to assist in overcoming challenges they face due to lack of resources
- Careful timing of press releases for when they do not have a p1 lead story - we help them and they help us. We also provide regular columns written by staff and councillors.
- Excellent media relations service which ensures they are given timely, accurate information about council activities both on request and proactively; considerable marketing spend on advertisements, supplements etc; weekly editorial provided for a half page in the weekly papers done in association with the local paper; media partnerships on major events.
- Good working relationship and mutual support for community events.
- Investigations currently underway to look at joint production of council newspaper within local newspapers. Trinity Mirror previously printed the council newspaper. Worked, through media relations, on campaigns and consultation activity.
- Joint campaigns/initiatives eg sponsoring community/business awards, joint campaigns for local business to win empty shop for a year, joint campaigns on major events (e.g. on blitz commemoration work in 2010)
- Lincolnshire Echo Editor helped run media training for councillors and officers in conjunction with council media team. He has also been interviewed for the council newspaper.
- Local newspaper designs and distributes our magazine. It also acts as media partner in many specific campaigns. We also support various business and environmental publications produced by the local paper.
- Our residents' magazine is printed by our local paper. We regularly organise initiatives with them and take out advertising supplements
- Pitched two newspaper group against each other to get best deal for advertising - including statutory notices
- Previously they provided the printing and distribution service for the in-house magazine. It was far more costly and ineffective than the system we operate now.
- Promoting Business Awards and Making A Difference Awards with a series of case studies of nominees and winners over a number of weeks in the South London Press. Sponsorship of Green Guardian pages in the News Shopper including participation in Green Guardian awards and coverage of Lewisham green initiatives in the news paper and on the paper's website.
- Provide features, place advertising, use the local paper to distribute residents' magazine.

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- Providing regular copy/campaigns, financial support/sponsorship for a variety of awards and events. We also use the local evening paper for recruitment, public notice and events advertising.
- The council provides information and photographs for campaigns; we also promote some of the local newspaper's events in our own comms channels (such as recruitment fairs etc). Plus there are countless responses to media enquiries, for which we provide lots of information, people for interviews, etc
- The local Yellow Advertiser used to print and distribute our newspaper, however it no longer does this.
- We enjoy extremely good relationships with all local and regional media and work together wherever possible. Examples have included the production of a commemorative supplement in the local paper to celebrate the return of the Light Dragoons from Afghanistan and our Pride in Breckland awards. Our Chief Executive and Chief Reporter have also delivered joint presentations on working together.
- We enjoy fairly good relationships with the majority of the many newspapers covering this district and therefore can call on them from time to time to ensure particular issues receive adequate coverage
- We have a good relationship with our local newspapers compared with some authorities.
- We have a good working relationship with them and provide them with a lot of last minute page fillers for advertising
- We have a green page that appears in the local Archant paper - we write the copy, they sub it. A number of other Herts authorities have started doing this too. It helps them as it's fixed income over a year. We also get them involved in producing programmes/guides for council run events, which gives them another avenue to get their name out there as well as make some income from the advertising in the guide. They occasionally sponsor events/projects by agreeing to give favourable coverage rather than a financial contribution.
- We have a media team who work hard to build up positive relationship with the local media and create many joined positive news stories – e.g. a schools pull out regarding the success in Southampton schools last year.
- We have a positive working relationship with the local papers on day to day media relations and they have a presence at many of our local events.
- We have an excellent relationship with our local media and work with them on lots of issues - we appreciate that sometimes they have to write negative stories but we are always given the right of reply. Our magazine does not conflict with our local press, but more compliments what they produce.
- We have collaborated on a number of projects to produce successful stories.
- We have done partnership work on several events including the Business Awards and the Country Show
- We have generally good relations, and use newspaper advertising as appropriate. We don't poach advertising content from local papers - we

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only carry ads from other public sector partners - e.g. PCT, college, police etc. We also run campaigns with local papers - e.g. pothole campaign this year. We have a strong local newspaper with a stable circulation and our magazine poses no threat - I am sure they would agree.

- We have meetings to discuss how we can work together on projects. They get involved in some of our community projects. We also place all statutory notices and advertising with them. They also sit on our City Centre Management Group.
- We have regular briefings in order that the journalists are informed. We also joined with them in promotion economic development to keep people staying in the district when shopping.
- We partner with the local paper on a number of campaigns, festivals and events - sometimes at our instigation, sometimes at theirs. They are our media partner, for example, in the harbour festival (approx. 300,000 visitors).
- We run regular campaigns and initiatives in partnership with the Clacton Gazette/Harwich Standard. These include an annual Tendring Sports Personality of the Year Award and we are about to launch a Shop Local Campaign with the papers next month.
- We work closely on certain campaigns, they sponsor the Mayor's Business Awards and are involved in the Sports Awards. Previous editor of Lynn News a Johnston Press publication used to be involved in our economic partnership and was chair of the Town Centre partnership
- Whenever the Council has a major event to promote a policy benefitting the community (for example it's Community Pub of the Year Awards), it works with the local media to "sponsor" the awards - benefitting the reputation of both media and council. This year, the Editor of the local newspaper handed out the pub awards raising the local media's profile as a community champion, and the Council praised the local media's own campaign to "shop local" and promote local pubs through their campaign called "love your local", again further raising the media's profile in the community.
- Where there have been significant projects - some of them contentious - in the newspapers area we have worked closely with them to give them exclusives and to help to engage their local community in health debate - e.g. school closures.
- Worked together on events, e.g. local newspaper has produced programme for Food Festival which council is involved in and kept advertising revenue

Local Government Association, November 2010

Annex C

Statutory notices councils are required to publish in newspapers include*:

- Traffic Regulation Orders
- Stopping Up of Highways under the Highways Act
- Any changes to Rights of Way, including modification, creation, diversion and extinguishment orders
- Village Green Applications which have to be in the paper and on the website
- Gating Orders
- Compulsory Purchase Orders
- Public Inquiries
- Planning matters
- Minerals and Waste Development Framework
- Change of Use of Greenbelt land
- Acquisition of land
- School Reorganisations including special needs provision
- School Admission Numbers
- Application for and renewal applications for Approved Premises for marriages and civil partnerships
- Places of religious worship that are being registered for the celebration of marriages
- Audit of Accounts
- Member Allowances
- Standards Committee items
- Executive Forward Plan
- Car Park Charging/Administration and Resident Permit Parking
- Independent schools wishing to join the maintained sector
- Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form
- Notice to close a school
- Establishing a new school
- Schools Admissions - if an admission number is proposed lower than the indicated admission number, the admissions authority must publish this information for parents in a local newspaper. Parents may then object to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator about the determined number.

* Based upon a list compiled by East Hertfordshire Council.