

Committee(s): Public Relations and Economic Development Sub (Policy and Resources)	Dated: 4 July 2016
Subject: Ward Newsletters	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Information
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Summary

This paper is a response to a request from this sub committee for further background on ward newsletters. It notes that newsletters currently fall under the remit of the Deputy Town Clerk, and that two editions per ward per year are published, in June and December. In pre-election years, this is increased to three editions. Whereas the centrepiece of each newsletter is identical, with copy provided by the Town Clerk’s Publishing Team, the front and back cover vary from ward to ward, giving rise to both corporate messaging from both the City of London Corporation, and ward-specific messaging from ward Members, in a single publication.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

1. Ward newsletters were established in 2004 following the changes to the City’s voting system or ‘franchise’.
2. They were set up, and funded from City’s Cash, on the basis that almost all Members at that time were Independents and therefore had no financial or logistical backing from established political parties to communicate with the expanded constituent base (those on the electoral register and therefore eligible to vote).
3. The newsletters were originally designed as Members’ means of reaching their voting population, but since then they have been supplemented by ward websites, social media, and other activities.
4. The ward newsletter system was created to be a ‘one size fits all’ to make it workable. In its early years the process was overseen by an Assistant Town Clerk. Following a reorganisation in the Town Clerk’s Department in 2008 the Public Relations Office (PRO) Publishing Team took over overall responsibility for newsletter production. The newsletters remain with the Publishing Team, which since the reorganisation of the PRO in 2015 falls under the remit of the Deputy Town Clerk.
5. Originally there were four newsletter editions per year per ward, later reduced to three when newsletter editors found that number of editions unmanageable, and

later down to two (June and December). In pre-election years ward editors have the option of producing an extra, third, newsletter.

6. Whether or not a ward issues a newsletter on each occasion during the year is at the discretion of the editor who may feel they do not have enough time to devote to its drafting, or not enough news to report to their constituents. As a rough rule the output in June and December can vary from 17 to the full 25 editions on each occasion.
7. One editor represents each ward and they are either volunteers or are chosen from among the Members of that ward. How the editorial process works is a matter for each ward. In some, a call for entries is sent to other Members; in others the editor is responsible for all aspects of the newsletter's drafting and production. Editors provide the content for the front and back covers of the newsletters, and the Publishing Team traditionally provides the content for the centrespread – which is consistent across all 25 newsletters.
8. The production schedule is sent to editors approximately seven weeks ahead of publications, including an indication of what material will be going into the centrespread. A reminder is sent one week before deadline. Over a two week period, drafts and revisions are made to the newsletters, and the final versions are read by the Publishing Team to pick up minor errors or examples of 'electioneering' before they are sent to press and then distributed (using the electoral database) via second class post to postal addresses. Newsletters are issued to circa 20,000 electors.
9. The newsletters are also available on the City Corporation website. There is a small number of people across the ward that have requested electronic versions rather than paper. They are sent an email by the Publishing Team, with a link to the page so they can download it.
10. These newsletters are intended as a communication from Members to their constituents and not as a City Corporation publication. This is why the logo does not appear but rather the coat of arms, signifying their relation to the City, not the City of London Corporation. This approach allows Members to include content that might not necessarily reflect the views of the organisation as a whole (for example, a project that has been approved in the wider interests of the City may have local ramifications that Members will oppose on behalf of their constituents but they are doing so on the basis of an issue and not a political standpoint).

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