

Messenger Best Value Review: Alternatives to Messenger DRAFT

Option	Advantages and Disadvantages	Financial Appraisal (per month)	Financial appraisal (over the year based on 12 editions)	Effect on the council's reputation
<p>1. Scrap it and do nothing to replace it</p>	<p>Repeated readership surveys have shown that Messenger is well read and well appreciated by a substantial majority of people. Research also shows that people want to hear news about the council direct from the council, and to get that straight through their letterbox, not second hand through newspapers or other means.</p>	<p>This would save the council approximately £8,000 per month (Distribution and printing).</p>	<p>£96,450 (the current cost of Messenger production and distribution).</p>	<p>This action would run counter to the findings of all the research the council has conducted into public communications; and would run counter to the council's strategic objective of being an open accessible and consultative organisation.</p>

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<p>2. Paid advertising in local free newspaper(s)</p>	<p>Readership surveys have shown that people prefer the size of Messenger as it is as it sets it apart from the other free newspapers. Editorial within a publication such as Milton Keynes on Sunday or the Citizen would have to carry the words 'advertising feature' to set it apart from the other news items in the papers. Nevertheless there would still be a likelihood of these pages being 'lost' and overlooked by readers. The advantage of this would be the council news could be spread out over several weeks- although in reality, it already is now. One of the reasons Messenger was established, and is still published, is to act as a vehicle for the Council to publish news and information which would not be carried , or be carried in insufficient depth, in local free</p>	<p>16 pages (A4) of full colour editorial is equivalent to 8pages in the Citizen the cost of which would be £1884 each (this already includes a Council bulk discount) for 8 pages = £15,000 each month.</p>	<p>Over the year this would cost the Council £180,000</p>	<p>Might be seen to be favouring a particular newspaper. Any inaccurate or damaging news items within the paper might be associated with (even placed near to) the council pages therefore lending to the news items a sense of legitimacy in the eyes of readers.</p> <p>Would be counter to the majority of people's expressed wish to receive information about the Council direct from the Council.</p>

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<p>2. Paid advertising in local free newspaper(s) cont</p>	<p>newspapers. There would be no separate distribution costs.</p> <p>Readers were also keen to keep Messenger on the current paper type. If information that would previously have been in Messenger were to be carried in adverts in a newspaper it would be (in effect) a reduction in the quality of the paper.</p>			

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3. Monthly supplement in a free newspaper	Advantages and disadvantages as option 2	Similar financial appraisal to option 2		
4. Leaflets through doors	When the council feels it has something important to communicate - referendum information, recycling news etc. a leaflet could be dropped through each door in Milton Keynes. Assuming this leaflet is not Messenger and not monthly. A corporate look (brand) would need to be established (like Messenger) so when receiving it people would know immediately to identify it from other junk mail.	<p>Direct mailing (using walksort software) would cost about £10,000 each time excluding the cost of the printing.</p> <p>Distribution costs would be approximately £15 -£20 per 1,000 (total for 96,000 £1,440-£1920 if the leaflet was delivered inside a local paper.</p> <p>Example of print cost: The council tax leaflet which is 1/3 of A4 size and has 12 pages cost about £5000 for 96,000.</p>	<p>Direct mailings would cost £120,000.</p> <p>Distribution with a local paper would cost £17,280 - £23,040.</p> <p>Printing £60,000.</p>	Might be more sporadic than the Messenger. People might feel that the council are only communicating when they have something good to talk about and therefore would be seen more as propaganda than news and information.

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<p>5. Leaflets and posters in libraries, doctor's surgeries, community centres, etc.</p>	<p>Messenger as well as being delivered to every household already goes to all businesses. 100 already go to CMK library and are then distributed to the branches. Some doctor's surgeries are involved in advertising agreements so that they can only display leaflets provided for them by the advertising companies. Readers would need to actively seek out Messenger to read it. A huge proportion would never see it. This would substantially affect its readership and may have equalities implications.</p>	<p>Less Messengers would need to be produced because less people would read them. Distribution would be for parcels of Messengers to go out by second class mail to 20-30 community centres and all those doctors surgeries who express an interest. (When asked in June 1998 no doctor's surgeries came forward to be an outlet for the Messenger).</p>		<p>Limiting residents ability to read about and therefore access the services available to them will run contrary to the council's strategic aim to tackle disadvantage and promote equality.</p> <p>Leaflets have a shorter life.</p>

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<p>6. Move editorial in to local papers, local radio, parish magazines, Mk website</p>	<p>See option 2 & 3 for advantages and disadvantages of using local papers.</p> <p>Advertising on the local radio would need to be specific to certain subjects - information such as the A to Z of services and What's On would be impossible to convey in a 30 second sound bite. Using radio would mean we could more effectively communicate with the visually impaired community (NB Messenger is already recorded on tape for the deaf). This would have equalities implications.</p> <p>A large number of people do not listen to local radio, or listen very infrequently.</p>	<p>Newspapers see option no. 2.</p> <p>For the referendum 30 second adverts were run for two weeks on Horizon Radio. This cost £400. These covered just one subject.</p>		<p>Use of all of these mediums might be perceived as being more expensive than producing all the information in one format. Some people might only receive the information in the local papers - whilst others who listen to local radio, use the Internet regularly and whose parish produce a regular magazine would get more information - and therefore greater access to services. Using different mediums could lead to confusion as to where the information is coming from.</p>

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<p>6. Move editorial in to local papers, local radio, parish magazines, Mk website (cont)</p>	<p>Parish magazines would be a useful vehicle for local news items. However Sometimes news and information items may be of interest Borough wide.</p> <p>Using the website to provide the information traditionally carried in Messenger would be an option. However it would mean that many people (those not currently linked to the net) would not be able to access the information and therefore would have equalities implications. The advantage of the website would be that stock information ie the A to Z of services or Councillor's surgeries could remain, while news items could change.</p>	<p>If we were to rely on Parish magazines for editorial space like any other paper of circular they might charge us to cover their own increased costs.</p> <p>Cost of putting items on the website would probably be minimal but additional advertising costs might be incurred reminding people to look on the site for this information.</p> <p>Much more liaison/production time would be needed for arrangements such as these. This would require additional staff time equating to approximately one additional Publications Officer Post.</p>		

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7. Revise Messenger to a 16 page format with no advertising	In recent surveys readers have quite liked having advertising in the Messenger. The Council would have the same amount of editorial space as now.	For 16 pages without advertising the council would face full print costs of about £8,000 a month (More than double the current cost)	£96,000 - this does not include distribution costs NB. The current print cost is about £3,800 per month (£45,600 per year based on 12 editions) .This is a discounted rate because the current publisher sells advertising within it which pays for some of the production cost. For this we will receive 16 pages for editorial.	In the short term this could result in bad PR as the council would be perceived to be spending more on Messenger. It would avoid possible problems of the Council being associated with less than desirable advertisers.
8. Revise Messenger to a 16page 'Sunday Supplement' size without advertising	As point 7. Messenger would still be easy to differentiate from other free papers but being larger than A4 there might be more room to lay out 'features'	For 16 pages full print costs would be approximately £11-13,000 per month	Approximately £132- 156,000 this does not include distribution.	As for point 7.
9. Revise Messenger to a 24 page format with less advertising	See point 7 for the situation at them moment. If advertising were restricted to just four pages the Council would be able to claim 20 pages for council news and information.	This change would result in the publishing company making less money from advertising and therefore charging more for production. The print cost would probably be about £5000-6000 per issue.	£60,000-£72,000. This cost should be added to distribution cost.	As for point 7. In the longer term the council would have more space to inform people which would improve its reputation.

