

## Isle of Wight Council ST 1337 29/07/2010 [For Immediate Release]

### Media spend

The council has a requirement, in many cases a statutory one, to place information before the general public.

The council also has a duty to ensure this information reaches the greatest number of people thereby achieving value for money.

Not only is the County Press the only weekly publication to have independently audited figures, no other local publication claims, certainly not using industry standard verification, to be read as widely as the County Press. The council's own annual residents' survey also shows the County Press was far and away the most widely used media outlet.

The council has also negotiated its rates of advertising with the County Press based on the volume of advertising involved to further ensure best value for money is being achieved

In terms of advertising placed, the largest proportion of advertising spend with the CP (37 percent) is on public, largely statutory, information including planning notices, official notices, job advertisements, traffic orders and licensing orders. In most of these, the council has no option but to advertise this information. This year's spend, for example, included a one-off spend of £15k for statutory notices for school reorganisation.

In addition to statutory and information notices, the council operates a range of services, such as leisure centres, theatres and tourist attractions that require income to keep them running. Therefore it advertises these services and events to help generate the required income. Expenditure in this area accounts for a third of the spend last year.

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> \* The council is required to spend money on a range of statutory functions such as advertising traffic orders, road closures, facilities closures, planning notices, licensing orders, dog orders etc - these form the largest percentage of this total spend figure at 37% of budgeted spend (for 2009-10 this was a little over £65k). This included for example £15k on the statutory notices for school reorganisation and £26.6k on traffic orders/notices.

> \* In addition the council operates a range of services which require income from the public to keep the costs of providing those services to a reasonable level such as leisure facilities, theatres, arts events and tourist attractions. In order to ensure this income is generated, the council is required to advertise these services. This accounted for around £54k last financial year.

> \* The council also undertakes to promote the Island as a visitor destination to attract visitors to the Island to support the main industries relying on tourism trade. One of the ways in which it does this is by staging and supporting events. In order to sustain these events and encourage participation a certain amount of money needs to be invested in their promotion. This activity amounts to around 6% of annual spend (in 2009-10 this was nearly £11k)

> \* The council also operates a large number of services for Island residents and is required to ensure that residents are aware of how to access these services. Whilst increasingly, the council is exploring low cost means of raising awareness of services, from time to time it is necessary to advertise those services to the public. This accounts for only 5% of this spend (in 2009-10 this was a little over £9k)

> \* The findings of the annual residents' survey raised concerns about speeding drivers, drugs and alcohol and anti-social behaviour. In response to these concerns the council launched a series of campaigns to try to tackle these perceived problems. This accounted for 11% of spend (in 2009-10 this amounted to £21k)

> \* The council has for a number of years rented office space to house the Connexions Service at 29 High St (the former County Press building). Payments made in rental amount to 7% of the spend figures (or nearly £12.5k). The Connexions service is still based in this building but we are looking to vacate this building as part of the council's overall move to rationalise the number of buildings that it operates from.

> \* We anticipate that the cost of advertising in this financial year 2010-11 will be reduced, in part because the council is no longer operating two of the theatres, through more stringent controls on service-led (non statutory) advertising and by using One Island magazine that this year is on schedule to recoup all costs.

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**1) "Over the period 2000-01 to 2008-09, the amount of money paid to the County Press has increased over 300%, from £71,394.08 to £215,808.34 a year."**

*What was the reason for this significant increase?*

There are numerous reasons for this increase.

- I. The cost of advertising has risen over the past decade.
- II. The council, in response to growing competition, has taken a more pro-active stance in advertising activities taking place in its theatres, attractions and leisure centres. The purpose of this advertising is to increase footfall and thus raise revenue.
- III. The council has also taken the decision to launch public awareness campaigns such as road safety (there has been much concern about speeding drivers and the number of young people involved in accidents) and trying to attract foster carers. These campaigns are multi-media and have, naturally, involved the County Press as the most widely seen local media outlet.
- IV. The council has also undertaken the major shift from a three-tier to a two-tier education system. This is a fundamental change that needs not only thorough communication to residents but also requires the publication of statutory notices. These one-off statutory notices alone cost around £15,000 last year.
- V. In recent years, the council has also centralised its communications functions meaning all advertising is booked centrally. Not only does this allow us to negotiate good rates it means that the figures compiled latterly since this change will give a more accurate figure. It is likely the totals for earlier years may have not have included the total actually spent across all council departments.

## **2) "CP got Two Thirds of all council ad spend**

In 2007-8 the County Press received over two thirds (66.81%) of the whole of the council's media spend off and on the Island (CP – £194,591.94, Total spend – £291,260.28).

Over the last ten years (period that we have figures for), it has remained at over half of all council ad media spend on and off the Island every year."

*Why does County Press receive such a majority of your advertising?*

The County Press is currently the only weekly newspaper on the Island and has over this period been the only publication with independently audited distribution figures. Furthermore these figures – and also the council's own annual research – shows the County Press to have unrivalled penetration (independent research in 2007 showed 92 per cent of Islanders read the CP) The largest proportion of our advertising – around 37 per cent is on statutory notices such as official notices (planning, roadwork, licensing orders etc).

Furthermore the original FOI on which this story is based asked for all spend with the County Press. The figure also includes some £12,000 a year paid to the newspaper for leasing of its former offices in Newport by the Connexions service. This figure should not therefore be attributed to advertising.

**3) "Labelled as the total amount spent in the year 2009-10 to date, the figure provided was over £900,000.**

From what we can make out, this is separate from the money that they spent on Job Adverts. That totals another £170,301.62 over a number of publications in the latest period (2009-10, to date figures)."

*Is this correct?*

Yes

Thank you very much. Any additional comment you wish to make will be welcomed.

Additional comment.

The council has, in response to economic pressures, sought to reduce its advertising budget and explore more efficient ways of disseminating information such as increased use of online and social media. We would expect the overall advertising spend to reduce considerably in the coming years.