

Councillor 4

From: Wardle, Adrian [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 May 2013 09:43
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Publicity Code consultation

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Lewisham Council currently produce four issues of our *Lewisham Life* magazine for residents each year and have done so since March 2011. We do not spend money on lobbyists. Your proposed action does not therefore have direct implications for this authority.

I would like to take this opportunity to raise with you an additional proposal that you could implement in order to save our residents more money. Councils are currently obliged to pay to advertise statutory notices in a local newspaper. According to a study for the Local Government Information Unit, removing this obligation would save local tax payers £67.85m per year. In Lewisham alone we spent over £60,000 in the last year on statutory notices published in this way and that excludes notices we placed on behalf of TfL.

I believe that councils should be given the freedom to decide for themselves where it is best to place public notices. In Lewisham we know from our own independent surveying that most people get information about local public services and what is happening in their area from the Council's magazine (49%) and then the Council's website (26%) with local newspapers following behind (24%). We also have a very active network of local community forums and blogs that can be used effectively to disseminate information and we have a growing number of subscribers to our own electronic news sources.

Given the financial pressures we are under we can no longer justify overlooking using large sums of our local taxpayers' money on advertising in local papers especially when few people are currently reading them and given that:

- readership of local newspapers is declining
- the number, and readership, of citizen-led hyperlocal and community websites meanwhile has been increasing – and their use and appreciation by elected members and officers has been too
- web technology allows for simple, cost-effective and publication on the internet.

While I appreciate circumstances may differ between authorities I believe the case is clear that it should be up to each individual Council to make a local decision as to where it publishes statutory public notices.

Cllr Damien Egan
Cabinet member for Strategy and Communication
Lewisham Council

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