



Title of the Assessment:	Developing our News & Information Offer	Date of Assessment:	13/01/16
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Stage 1 - Setting out the nature of the proposal and potential outcomes.

Stage 1 – Aims and Objectives	
1.1	<p>What are the objectives of the proposal under consideration?</p> <p>Proposing to change approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> from quarterly production of News Central to annual Info Central directory: How to contact us – multi channel, including service standards Your services- an A-Z Your Councillors – who’s who and webcast promotion Your money – Council Tax explained and payment options Your feedback – how to comment, complain or compliment Stay in touch – email bulletins and social media Using local printed publications <p>For example almost 30 Town and Parish Councils have their own newsletter. The main towns of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard produce their own publications for local residents, while Biggleswade and Sandy prefer to channel their news via the Biggleswade, Sandy and Beeston Bulletin (Rosetta Publishing title). Although the frequency of publication varies, most are open to including news from CBC but it would need to be very relevant i.e. very localised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending our use of local digital channels <p>There are approximately 50 local Facebook pages in Central Bedfordshire. Some local radio stations have websites that could publish Council news. Some of the local newspapers also have fairly active Facebook pages or websites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> building digital skills <p>Some activities are happening in Central Bedfordshire already and there is potential for the council to partner with the agencies or support them by providing funding, training venues or equipment. The council will also provide some how to guides.</p>
1.2	<p>Why is this being done?</p> <p>The Council needs to identify efficiency savings as central government funding to local government continues to reduce. This approach also fits with the council’s digitisation agenda.</p> <p>Ofcom research indicates that newspapers have become the least popular medium for news with just 31% of the UK population reading a newspaper (reduction of 10% since 2014).</p>

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Mosaic analysis indicates that 95% of our residents use internet daily, 72% have smartphones and 86% have laptops and 52% have a tablet. Amongst older residents, 94% use internet daily, 44% have smartphones and 73% have laptops.

We also know from our own feedback surveys that residents would prefer their news to be localised, so it is about where they live rather than Central Bedfordshire as a whole. This is not achievable through News Central as it is one publication for the whole area. Using local publications and digital channels we can provide more relevant local news to residents.

Our own research has also indicated that reducing the frequency of News Central has not impacted on how informed residents feel about the council. In 2009 when the council was first established we produced 9 editions a year. This was reduced to six and for the past few years we have only produced four editions a year. In 2009 48% of residents said they felt informed, this increased to 62% in 2011 and has slowly increased to 66% with minor fluctuations around this figure between 2011 and 2015 but these are not significant.

Research into Local Authorities communication practices indicates that civic papers continue to decline. In 2015, 92% of borough/district councils produced a paper and for the larger authorities it was 78%. Now it is less than half for both, down to 47% of borough/districts and 44% of larger authorities.

For those authorities that have continued to produce newsletters frequency has reduced. Ten years ago newsletters were produced four or six times a year. Now two or three a year is more likely.

Some of this reduction is in response to austerity measures and some is in response to the updated Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011) which states "Where local authorities do commission or publish newsletters, news sheets or similar communications, they should not issue them more frequently than quarterly."

The Code also states "In relation to all publicity, local authorities should be able to confirm that consideration has been given to the value for money that is being achieved." This proposal fits with this guidance.

1.3 What will be the impact on staff or customers?

Residents will no longer receive a quarterly newsletter from the council but will receive an annual information bulletin and further information throughout the year through a variety of sources and platforms.

1.4 How does this proposal contribute or relate to other Council initiatives?

- Value for money – continuing focus on cost efficiency and effectiveness
- Responsive council – improve customer experience and satisfaction

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1.5 In which ways does the proposal support Central Bedfordshire’s legal duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

The proposal recognises that some sections of the community still have a preference for receiving printed information and the provision of an annual Information Central booklet will help to address this need.

Recognising the benefits of digital communication, the proposal also includes a focus on building digital skills.

1.6 Is it possible that this proposal could damage relations amongst groups of people with different protected characteristics or contribute to inequality by treating some members of the community less favourably such as people of different ages, men or women, people from black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, carers, people with different religions or beliefs, new and expectant mothers, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities?

The proposal recognises that some groups, for example people with certain types of disability, are less likely / not able to use digital channels and there is still a need to be able to access written information or via telephony channels.

Stage 2 - Consideration of national and local research, data and consultation findings in order to understand the potential impacts of the proposal.

Stage 2 - Consideration of Relevant Data and Consultation

In completing this section it will be helpful to consider:

- **Publicity** – Do people know that the service exists?
- **Access** – Who is using the service? / Who should be using the service? Why aren't they?
- **Appropriateness** – Does the service meet people’s needs and improve outcomes?
- **Service support needs** – Is further training and development required for employees?
- **Partnership working** – Are partners aware of and implementing equality requirements?
- **Contracts & monitoring** – Is equality built into the contract and are outcomes monitored?

2.1. Examples of relevant evidence sources are listed below. Please tick which evidence sources are being used in this assessment and provide a summary for each protected characteristic in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

Internal desktop research

X	Place survey / Customer satisfaction data	X	Demographic Profiles – Census & ONS
	Local Needs Analysis		Service Monitoring / Performance Information
X	Other local research		

Third party guidance and examples

	National / Regional Research		Analysis of service outcomes for different groups
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Best Practice / Guidance	X	Benchmarking with other organisations
Inspection Reports		

Public consultation related activities

Consultation with Service Users		Consultation with Community / Voluntary Sector
Consultation with Staff		Customer Feedback / Complaints
Data about the physical environment e.g. housing market, employment, education and training provision, transport, spatial planning and public spaces		

Consulting Members, stakeholders and specialists

X	Elected Members	Expert views of stakeholders representing diverse groups
	Specialist staff / service expertise	

Please bear in mind that whilst sections of the community will have common interests and concerns, views and issues vary within groups. E.g. women have differing needs and concerns depending on age, ethnic origin, disability etc

Lack of local knowledge or data is not a justification for assuming there is not a negative impact on some groups of people. Further research may be required.

2.2. Summary of Existing Data and Consultation Findings: - Service Delivery Considering the impact on Customers/Residents

- **Age:** e.g. Under 16 yrs / 16-19 yrs / 20-29 yrs / 30-44 yrs / 45-59 yrs / 60-64 yrs / 65-74 yrs / 75+

Age UK Internet Use amongst Older People 17 September 2013

Women aged 75 and over who live alone are the most likely group in society to have never been online. In addition, older people with lower economic wealth, those living alone and those in relatively worse health are far less likely to be online.

Top five areas for internet use amongst people aged 65 and over:		People 65+ offline	People 65+ online
Surrey	% within Area	37.0%	63.0%
Bedfordshire	% within Area	46.2%	53.8%
Buckinghamshire	% within Area	46.6%	53.4%
Suffolk	% within Area	47.1%	52.9%
Oxfordshire	% within Area	50.0%	50.0%

Independent Age 2030 Vision March 2014:

People in the 55 to 64-year age group are driving growth on the internet with 35% now having a social networking profile, numbers of older people getting online is rising rapidly. What's more, older people who use the internet are three times less likely to say they are lonely than those who don't.

The fact remains, though, that the number of internet users drops considerably for the over-75s. In 2012, only 27% of this age group were online at home, plus they were three times more likely to be unconfident about using the internet.

Office National Statistics 2015

Adults aged 75 years and over had the highest rate of lapsed internet users in quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015 at 6%, compared with 0.3% of adults aged 16 to 24 years. This suggests that, although more adults aged 75 years and over are becoming internet users, they are not necessarily continuing to use the internet.

Of the 5.9 million adults who had never used the internet in quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015, just over half (3.0 million) were aged 75 years and over.

Whilst older people are more likely to read News Central (Residents Survey 2011) we can make an assumption that they are therefore more likely to read local publications such as Town and Parish Council newsletters too so they will still receive information from the council.

- Disability: *e.g. Physical impairment / Sensory impairment / Mental health condition / Learning disability or difficulty / Long-standing illness or health condition / Severe disfigurement*

Oxford Internet Surveys 2013:

While disabilities, such as health-related problems, are a continuing source of digital exclusion, OxIS 2013 shows that over half (51%) of British people with a disability use the Internet. This is a rise of 15 percentage points from 2007. Unfortunately, 51% is still considerably less than the 84% of non-disabled respondents who use the Internet, leaving a major digital divide for the disabled.

Office National Statistics 2015

- In quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015, 27% of disabled adults (3.3 million) had never used the internet. There were 0.5 million disabled adults, who had last used the internet over 3 months ago, making up 48% of the 1.1 million lapsed internet users.
- In quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015, the proportion of adults who were recent internet users was lower for those that were disabled (68%), compared with those that were not disabled (92%).
- In quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015 the proportion of adults aged 16 to 24 years who were recent internet users was lower for those that were disabled (95% recent users) compared with those that were not disabled (99% recent users).
- The proportion of adults aged 75 years and over who were recent internet users was also lower for those that were disabled (27% recent users) compared with those that were not disabled (40% recent users).

The new website will meet national accessibility standards which means people who are online with a disability will be able to access our news and service information much more easily.



- **Carers:** *A person of any age who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help due to illness, disability, mental ill-health or a substance misuse problem*

Research commissioned by the Department of Health and produced by Crossroads Care and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers:

Because nearly nine in 10 carers find it difficult to leave their home due to their caring roles, the internet has a very valuable role to play in providing access to services and support to those who have difficulty accessing them in the offline world, particularly as 95% of users mainly access the internet from home

As technology continues to develop and options for telecare and telehealth expand, the internet is likely to become an even more essential tool for carers, making the provision of online services and support more relevant and useful than ever. However Not all carers use the internet and even those who do may not always be able to access services online or may prefer to use another method.

- **Gender Reassignment:** *People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex*

No issues identified

- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** *e.g. pregnant women / women who have given birth & women who are breastfeeding (26 week time limit then protected by sex discrimination provisions)*

No issues identified

- **Race:** *e.g. Asian or Asian British / Black or Black British / Chinese / Gypsies and Travellers / Mixed Heritage / White British / White Irish / White Other*

Office National Statistics 2015

In quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015, the ethnic group with the highest percentage of recent internet users was the mixed or multiple ethnic background (97%).

White 85.9%	Mixed/multiple ethnic 97%	Indian 87.8%
Pakistani 85.7%	Bangladeshi 83.1%	Chinese 92.6%
Other Asian 91%	Black/African/Caribbean/BlackBritish 87.7%	
Other ethnic group 90.5%		

- **Religion or Belief:** *e.g. Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Jewish / Muslim / Sikh / No religion / Other*

Some religious groups such as seventh day Adventists avoid use of the internet and will need to be able to access information in other ways.

- **Sex:** *e.g. Women / Girls / Men / Boys*

Office National Statistics 2015

In quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015, 88% of men (22.2 million) and 85% of women (22.4 million) were recent internet users. Since quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2011, the proportion of men and women who were recent internet users has increased by 6 and 8 percentage points respectively.

Men in the oldest 2 age groups are more likely to use the internet than women in the same age groups. In quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015, 41% of men aged 75 years and over were recent internet users compared with 27% of women.

There is little difference in the rates of internet use between men and women in all age groups under 65 years of age.

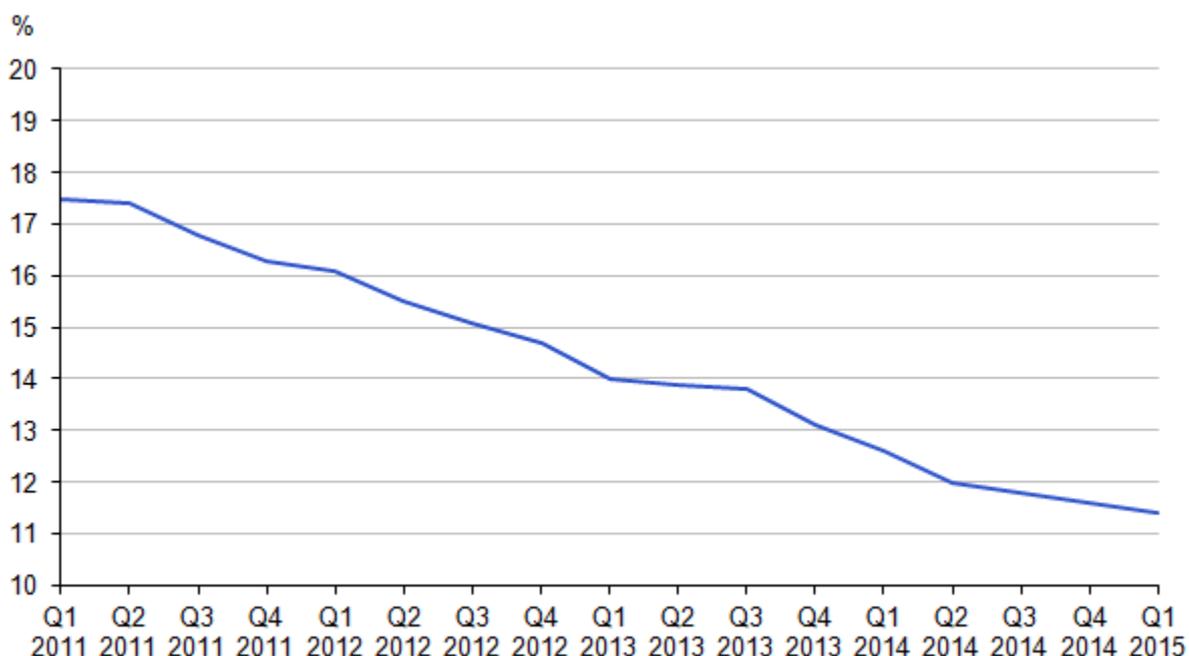
- **Sexual Orientation:** *e.g. Lesbians / Gay men / Bisexuals / Heterosexuals*
No issues identified

- **Other:** *e.g. Human Rights, Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion, Marriage and Civil Partnership*

Office National Statistics 2015

- In quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2015, 86% of adults (44.7 million) in the UK had used the internet in the last 3 months (recent users), an increase of 1 percentage point since the quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2014 estimate of 85%.
- 11% of adults (5.9 million) had never used the internet, falling by 1 percentage point since quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2014.

Internet non-users



2.3. Summary of Existing Data and Consultation Findings – Employment Considering the impact on Employees

- **Age:** *e.g. 16-19 / 20-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50-59 / 60+* **N/A**

- **Disability:** *e.g. Physical impairment / Sensory impairment / Mental health condition / Learning disability or difficulty / Long-standing illness or health condition / Severe disfigurement* **N/A**

- **Carers:** *e.g. parent / guardian / foster carer / person caring for an adult who is a spouse,*

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partner, civil partner, relative or person who lives at the same address **N/A**

- **Gender Reassignment:** *People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex* **N/A**

- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** *e.g. Pregnancy / Compulsory maternity leave / Ordinary maternity leave / Additional maternity leave* **N/A**

- **Race:** *e.g. Asian or Asian British / Black or Black British / Chinese / Gypsies and Travellers / Mixed Heritage / White British / White Irish / White Other* **N/A**

- **Religion or Belief:** *e.g. Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Jewish / Muslim / Sikh / No religion / Other* **N/A**

- **Sex:** *Women / Men* **N/A**

- **Sexual Orientation:** *e.g. Lesbians / Gay men / Bisexuals / Heterosexuals* **N/A**

- **Other:** *e.g. Human Rights, Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion, Marriage and Civil Partnership*

2.4. To what extent are vulnerable groups more affected by this proposal compared to the population or workforce as a whole?

Research indicates that some disabled and older people are less likely to be online. The measures identified in relation to exploring local publications to develop other channels and building digital skills will help to address this issue.

2.5. To what extent do current procedures and working practices address the above issues and help to promote equality of opportunity?

Building digital skills

For example, Citizens Advice are just starting an initiative in Leighton Linlade with Barclays Digital Eagles. Also, Age UK also run Tea and Teach sessions. Both of these agencies are open to discussions about partnering. The Housing team at CBC hold monthly gadget sessions for housing tenants. This could be extended with additional funding.

Community Newsletters

Almost 30 Town and Parish Councils have their own newsletter. The main towns of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard produce their own publications for local residents, while Biggleswade and Sandy prefer to channel their news via the Biggleswade, Sandy and Beeston Bulletin (Rosetta Publishing title).

Although the frequency of publication varies, most are open to including news from CBC but it would need to be very relevant i.e. very localised.

There are two Rosetta Publishing newsletters. These magazines are published monthly and cover the following areas:

- Mid Beds Bulletin – Ampthill, Flitwick, Harlington, Toddington and Westoning
- Biggleswade, Sandy and Beeston Bulletin

Other community titles that cover a wider area include:

- The Oracle Flitwick and Ampthill Directory – published 10 times per year (Ampthill,

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Flitwick, Lidlington, Westoning, Harlington, Toddington)

- The Oracle Villages Directory – published 10 times per year (Barton, Shefford, Silsoe, Houghton Conquest, Pulloxhill, Greenfield, Flitton, Clophill, Maulden, Marston Moretaine)
- On the Button – monthly magazine (Arlesey, Fairfield, Ickleford, Henlow, Henlow Camp and Lower Stondon)
- The Vine Villages – magazine published six times per year (Toddington, Harlington, Hockliffe, Stanbridge, Tilsworth, Eggington, Tebworth, Totternhoe, Eaton Bray)
- The Vine Dunstable - magazine published six times per year (Dunstable, Studham, Whipsnade, Kensworth, Houghton Regis)

2.6. Are there any gaps in data or consultation findings

The budget consultation includes a question which will gauge levels of support for reducing printing costs and making better use of technology but we know from previous consultations with similar questions that residents are supportive of doing more online.

2.7. What action will be taken to obtain this information?

Budget consultation feedback. We will also continue to evaluate how informed people are about the council in the council's Residents Survey.

Stage 3 - Providing an overview of impacts and potential discrimination.

Stage 3 – Assessing Positive & Negative Impacts

Analysis of Impacts	Impact?		Discrimination?		Summary of impacts and reasons
	(+ve)	(- ve)	YES	NO	
3.1 Age	neutral			✓	older people with lower economic wealth, those living alone and those in relatively worse health are far less likely to be online. The number of internet users drops considerably for the over-75s. This group are more likely to read local publications
3.2 Disability	neutral			✓	Use of the internet is lower among some groups of disabled people so local publications will still be needed.
3.3 Carers	neutral			✓	The internet has a very valuable role to play in providing access to services and support. Information in local publications will also be helpful
3.4 Gender Reassignment	neutral			✓	No issues identified
3.5 Pregnancy & Maternity	neutral			✓	No issues identified
3.6 Race	neutral			✓	The internet is accessed to a great extent by all racial groups
3.7 Religion / Belief	neutral			✓	No issues identified as local publications will be available
3.8 Sex	neutral			✓	Women aged 75 and over who live alone are the most likely group in

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				society to have never been online. This group are more likely to read local publications
3.9 Sexual Orientation	neutral		✓	No issues identified
3.10 Other e.g. <i>Human Rights, Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion Marriage and Civil Partnership</i>	neutral		✓	11% of adults (5.9 million) had never used the internet. Information in local publications will also be helpful

Stage 4 - Identifying mitigating actions that can be taken to address adverse impacts.

Stage 4 – Conclusions, Recommendations and Action Planning			
4.1 What are the main conclusions and recommendations from the assessment?			
Internet usage is increasing across most groups but there is still a need for a mixed approach to take account of people who need written and other sources of information.			
4.2 What changes will be made to address or mitigate any adverse impacts that have been identified?			
More use of local publications to provide news. Info Central booklet for information on how to access our services.			
4.3 Are there any budgetary implications?			
Approximately £4,000 (printing and distribution) per year plus significant officer time in terms of editorial and design.			
4.4 Actions to be taken to mitigate against any adverse impacts:			
Action	Lead Officer	Date	Priority
Proposed actions are set out in section 2.5			

Stage 5 - Checking that all the relevant issues and mitigating actions have been identified

Stage 5 – Quality Assurance & Scrutiny: Checking that all the relevant issues have been identified
5.1 What methods have been used to gain feedback on the main issues raised in the assessment?
Step 1:
Has the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) reviewed this assessment and provided feedback? <i>Yes</i>
Summary of CPA's comments:

The Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) has supported the development of the EIA

Step 2:

5.2 Feedback from Central Bedfordshire Equality Forum 14 January 2016

No specific concerns were expressed in relation to News Central.

Stage 6 - Ensuring that the actual impact of proposals are monitored over time.

Stage 6 – Monitoring Future Impact

6.1 How will implementation of the actions be monitored?

We will also continue to evaluate how informed people are about the council in the council's Residents Survey.

6.2 What sort of data will be collected and how often will it be analysed?

Survey data collected at least once every two years, possibly more often. The next survey will be in September 2016 which will be almost a year since the last publication of News Central.

6.3 How often will the proposal be reviewed?

If survey data or customer feedback suggests that we need to review the decision.

6.4 Who will be responsible for this?

Communications Team

6.5 How have the actions from this assessment been incorporated into the proposal?

Not applicable

Stage 7 - Finalising the assessment.

Stage 7 – Accountability / Signing Off

7.1 Has the lead Assistant Director/Head of Service been notified of the outcome of the assessment

Name: Karen Aspinall Date: 22/01/16

7.2 Has the Corporate Policy Adviser Equality & Diversity provided confirmation that the Assessment is complete?

Date: 22/01/16