

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 25 November 2014

Wards: ALL

Subject: My Merton distribution

Lead officer: Ged Curran

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison

Contact officer: Sophie Poole

Recommendations:

- A. The Commission is requested to discuss and comment on the report and advise if further data is required
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The commission has requested a brief report on the distribution of the circulation and distribution of My Merton, to include results from the Annual Residents Survey in relation to readership. This report is provided as an information paper which sets out the relevant data for the commission's consideration.

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BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SET UP

- 2.1. My Merton is the council's resident magazine which is produced quarterly and delivered door to door to 81,000 households across the borough. London Letterbox is the council's current distribution supplier.
- 2.2. In addition, approximately 3000 copies are available at council satellite offices across the borough including libraries. Copies are also available at the Wimbledon Information Desk in Centre Court Shopping Centre. A digital copy of My Merton is available to download from the council website, where readers will also find an archive of back issues. A link to the digital version is shared via the council's social media channels, Twitter and Facebook and can be accessed via the council's digital news room. So far in 2014, the digital version of My Merton has been received a total of 4480 visits, averaging 1200 visits per issue.
- 2.3. My Merton has been in circulation since October 2003. It was originally set up as a bi-monthly magazine with 80,000 copies distributed by Royal Mail to every household in Merton. Copies were also available at key locations across the borough. Although the magazine itself was well received, the council received a number of complaints from residents regarding unsuccessful delivery. Therefore in 2005, the council changed to the current delivery supplier, London Letterbox.
- 2.4. In 2010 the frequency of the magazine reduced to quarterly in order to find savings. In 2011, the Local Government Publicity Code was revised

stating that all council magazines should be produced on a quarterly basis or less. In 2014, the Local Government Publicity Code became legislation.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL PUBLICATIONS

- 2.5. The council's first resident publication was published in 1994 and was a monthly newspaper. Named Merton Messenger, it was delivered door to door to every household in Merton. In 1999, the paper was replaced by a quarterly magazine called the new Merton Messenger in order to find savings.
- 2.6. In 2000 the decision was taken to take Merton Messenger as a saving. Instead, in 2001, the council redirected its advertising spend, placing a double page advertorial in the local Guardian each week as a way of keeping residents informed.
- 2.7. Over time the Guardian reduced the circulation of their paper across the borough. As a result the council received a significant number of complaints from residents not receiving a copy of the Guardian. Therefore in 2003, a decision was taken to reinstate a council magazine to be delivered to every household in the borough, the result of which is My Merton

ANALYSIS OF ANNUAL RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

- 2.8. In 2002 and 2010, IPSOS MORI and LGA together with the IDeA conducted a piece of research to investigate what affected councils informed rating. Not surprisingly, having a regular council publication was found to have a direct impact on the number of residents who said they feel informed about the council.

It is useful to see how the annual residents' survey informed ratings have been affected over the last 20 years, when the distribution or frequency of the magazine has changed. A breakdown of these figures is in Appendix 1 with a key summary in the table below:

Year	Rating	% -/+	Distribution	Circulation	Issues per year	Publication
1995	69%	0	Door to door	Borough-wide	12	Merton Messenger
1999	50%	-19%	Door to door	Borough-wide	4	New Merton Messenger
2002	61%	+11	Local paper	Reduced coverage	52	Merton News
2004	56%	-5	Door to Door Royal Mail	Borough-wide	6	My Merton
2005	62%	+7	Door to Door London Letterbox	Boroughwide	6	My Merton
2007-2013	70% and over	Merton performs consistently above the London and Outer London average. The current informed rating is 76%.				

- 2.9. Since 2007, the informed rating has been consistently about the London and outer London average. It is also worth noting that the informed rating did not dip in 2010 following a reduction in frequency from bi-monthly to

quarterly. However this also coincided with the magazine first being available online, and therefore it is possible residents started to view the digital version of My Merton instead.

READERSHIP

2.10. Since 2012, the annual residents' survey has included a question, asking how residents keep informed about what's happening in Merton. In 2012, the local Guardian came top, with My Merton second and the council website third. In 2013, My Merton took the top spot, followed by the local Guardian with the council website coming third.

2.11. Delving deeper into the results, the table featured below shows how residents responded by age. Predominantly residents who are 50 years old and over said they read My Merton to keep informed about what's happening in Merton. It is worth noting that 26% of residents aged 18-34 said they use the council website.

Age	My Merton	Website
18-34 year olds	19%	26%
35-49 year olds	33%	29%
50-59 year olds	42%	28%
60+	47%	13%

2.12. Slightly more females (33%) than males (32%) chose My Merton as their preferred channel. Looking at ethnicity, 36 per cent of people who classified themselves as white responded to say they read My Merton to keep informed about what is happening in Merton, with 25 per cent from the BME population. This figure is broken down by Asian (27%) and Black/Black Brit (25%).

2.13. For social economic backgrounds, the largest group was C1.

	My Merton	Website
AB	33%	29%
C1	35%	26%
C2	33%	23%
DE	28%	21%

2.14. Looking at working status, people who are retired responded with the highest percentage (45%), followed by those in employment (31%) and unemployed (25%). Households without children (32%) came out slightly higher compared to households with children (33%).

- 2.15. Breaking readership down by location, My Merton is read more in Mitcham and Morden, than in Wimbledon. The ward clusters are set out as follows:

	My Merton	Website
Village/Hillside/Raynes Park/Wimbledon Park	22%	23%
Dundonald/Trinity/Abbey	20%	23%
Cannon Hill/Merton Park/W.Barnes/Lower Morden	33%	23%
Lavender Fields/Pollards Hill/Figge's Marsh	36%	24%
Ravensbury St Helier/Cricket Green	45%	23%
Colliers Wood Graveney/Longthornton	38%	30%

- 2.16. The same set of questions are being asked in the 2014 survey, so response rates can start to be tracked over time.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

As this paper is for information there are no alternative options being put forward for consideration at this stage.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

Again as this is an information paper, no consultation has taken place in relation to this paper at this stage.

5 TIMETABLE

As this paper is for information there is no timetable for delivery at this stage.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

As this paper is for information there are no implications at this stage. However it is worth noting that the distribution supplier is commissioned on an issue by issue basis, therefore there is no binding contract.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

As this paper is for information there are no implications at this stage. My Merton is a non-statutory function.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

As this paper is for information there are no implications at this stage. However if the council were to review the distribution method, consideration to accessibility would need to be carefully considered, as previous experience has demonstrated.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

As this paper is for information there are no implications at this stage.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

As this paper is for information there are no implications at this stage.

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

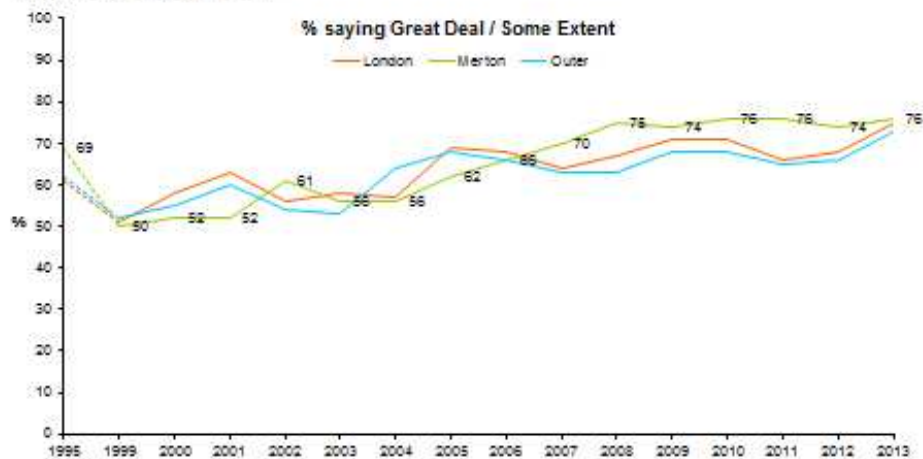
Annual Residents Survey results - 2013

12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix 1

Keeps residents informed

Merton continues to score slightly above the London-wide average despite the gap narrowing in 2013



Source: Q3 These are some things which other people have said about their council. To what extent do you think these statements apply to your borough?
Base: All adults 2013 (Merton: 1032, London: 1020)



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