

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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UPDATE ON SPONSORSHIP AND ADVERTISING POLICY

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

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Summary

Members are asked to note the update on the application of the Council's Sponsorship and Advertising Policy introduced in 2019.

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1 Cabinet approved the policy on 18 December 2018 following review of the proposed policy by this committee on 29 November 2018.

2. Background

2.1. The policy advises Councillors, officers, partners and prospective advertising and sponsorship partners on what are, and are not, acceptable forms of advertising and sponsorship for the Council. The policy relates to current and prospective advertising and sponsorship opportunities connected to the Council's buildings, assets and physical resources and both new and existing products and services, including events. Introducing an advertising and sponsorship policy allowed the Council to take a consistent and corporate approach to opportunities with established standards. It provides a clear framework and control measures, ensures the Council complies with legislation, industry codes and other council policies and secures best value for money in all that the Council does.

2.2. This report provides an update on how the policy has worked three years on, however the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that very little activity has taken place during the past 20 months as we have not been working in a business-as-usual environment and sadly opportunities for securing sponsorship and advertising have been extremely limited.

2.3. The policy has given the Council a very helpful framework with which to judge any decisions on accepting or seeking sponsorship and advertising for our

events, assets and activities. Its main application has been in the area of our roundabout sponsorship in Medway.

2.4. Sponsorship

- 2.4.1 Opportunities for sponsorship of third party events have been very limited and we did not activities during this time have been very limited. We have continued to sponsor, along with others, the Pride in Medway Awards and the Kent Charity Awards recognising the great work done in our communities by individuals and our voluntary sector organisations.
- 2.4.2 Likewise, we have hosted few events that have sought external sponsorship during this time. In July 2019, Medway hosted the UK HSBC British Cycling National Circuit Championships Final – a nationally broadcast event that brought the elite of male and female road cycling to race through the streets of Rochester. As well as the elite races there were races for local clubs and children with a host of family friendly activities in the castle gardens. The event attracted thousands of visitors for the day and was a good opportunity to put Medway on the map as a host for such events. To help offset the costs of marketing the event, we secured financial sponsorship from The University of Kent and Rochester Riverside who saw this as a useful opportunity to raise their profile and from Kent Messenger Group who were our media partner providing advertising and promotion through their channels as their sponsorship contribution.
- 2.4.3 We have also attracted sponsorship for the Council's Make A Difference Awards in November 2019. Sponsorship is normally only secured from a small number of partners the Council works very closely with such as Medway Norse, VolkerHighways, Mears Group, Project Centre and Rundles. All names are cleared with the Assistant Directors before any approaches are made. The Finance Division Our annual Medway Blossoms competition is sponsored by McDonalds.

2.5 Advertising

- 2.5.1 Again opportunities to attract advertising have been hit by the pandemic. Our primary assets for advertising are roundabouts and Medway Matters.
- 2.5.2 Advertising of our roundabouts has been in place for approximately 18 months. There was originally a slow uptake up to the advertising, initially when we were getting the opportunity marketed through our contracted service provider, Community Partners, who arrange all advertising but primarily due to the pandemic when potential advertisers nationally and locally halted all advertising with their futures uncertain and vehicle movements in Medway severely curtailed due to the lockdowns and general stay home arrangements. However, in recently months Community Partners has seen a steady increase in sales and in October, 23 of our roundabout sites were carrying advertising.
- 2.5.3 Before any new advertiser is accepted, the service provider will contact the Highways and Communications teams to ensure that the proposed advertiser

is suitable under the terms of the policy. Advertisers to date come from a range of sectors including property, financial services, professional services, home goods suppliers, garages and taxis. To date only one proposed advertiser has been turned down.

- 2.5.4 Although publication of Medway Matters was reduced during the pandemic, we have taken limited advertising from a number of organisations including education providers, visitor attractions, professional services organisations, healthcare providers and other public sector partners. All advertising goes through the Communications Team.
- 2.5.5 We sometimes have limited opportunities available for advertising on the council's lampposts in certain areas of Medway and we have taken a couple of advertisers from a housing developer and visitor attraction but until now, we have tended to use the lampposts primarily to promote our events and activities taking place across Medway as this is an effective way to reach large scale audiences and to promote Medway.
- 2.5.6 Advertising principles – all advertising undertaken by the Council is created through the Council's Communications Team meaning that we ensure that all the codes of conduct laid down by the Advertising Standards Authority are complied with. Likewise, the Communications Team oversees the production of any publication or online channels where advertising is accepted and ensures that all guidelines within the Policy are complied with.
- 2.5.7 Our own advertising activities are largely carried out with local media companies such as Global and Kent Messenger.
- 2.6 As we start to return to business as usual we will be reviewing this policy over the coming months. We are starting to explore potential variations to the policy linked to the Council's proposed drive for a whole systems approach to health and wellbeing and the need to tackle Medway's obesity challenge as well championing our Climate Change and Child Friendly Medway agendas. This could involve limiting promotional opportunities with businesses such as fast-food companies and working to promote healthy alternatives as well as making more space for such advertising on our own assets.
- 2.7 We will also be exploring how we might be able to make better use of council assets to attract more advertising and sponsorship under the terms of this policy although we have limited resources available in the council to seek opportunities. We will also be issuing reminders to all service managers of their duties under the policy.

3. Risk management

- 3.1 Having the policy in place has ensured that the Council is taking a consistent and considered approach to all advertising and sponsorship to ensure we are complying with all legislation and that we have the right checks and balances in place to protect the Council's reputation and ensure value for money.

4. Climate change implications

- 4.1 As part of our drive to become carbon neutral, much of our advertising is now undertaken through digital channels. The Communications Team ensures that climate considerations are taken into account in any advertising decision we take.
- 4.2 As our policy is reviewed, we will ensure climate change is considered in any changes proposed.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this update report.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no new legal implications from this update report.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sponsorship and Advertising Policy

Background papers

None