

Governance Directorate

Director of Governance: Daniel Fenwick



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Paul Rowsell
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Date: 9 October 2014

By email to: paul.rowsell@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Mr Rowsell,

Written Representations made in respect of Notice of Statutory Direction under Section 4A(5) of the Local Government Act 1986

Introduction and summary

This letter sets out the London Borough of Waltham Forest's ("the Council") representations in response to the Secretary of State's notice of a proposed direction under section 4A of the Local Government Act 1986 given on 25 September 2014 as best as we can in light of the Secretary of State's failure to provide any of the evidence and/or information requested and his refusal to provide us with an adequate amount of time in which to respond. These representations should be read together with the Council's previous written representations dated 29 April 2014 ("the April representations") (copy attached as **Appendix A**) sent in response to a previous notice of a proposed direction (now withdrawn).

In summary, the Council submits that the Secretary of State should not make the proposed direction. It is now accepted that the Council complies with every aspect of the Code of Practice other than the requirement to publish newspapers no more frequently than quarterly. The sole basis for the proposed direction is that the Council's free sheet "Waltham Forest News" ("WFN") is unfair competition for the independent local media. However, the Secretary of State has provided no evidence to support his assertion of unfair competition which is contradicted by the available evidence.



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The Council has had careful regard to the provisions of the Code as to frequency but has decided to publish its free newspaper WFN 23 times a year because it is the most cost effective way for the Council to meet its various duties to publish statutory notice and other appropriate publicity. Such an approach is consistent with, inter alia, the Council's fiduciary duty to taxpayers to use its resources efficiently and its duties under section 149 Equality Act 2010 and the provisions of the Code on cost effectiveness (paragraphs 10-14) and equality and diversity (paragraphs 31-32).

In such circumstances, any Direction would serve no legitimate purpose. Further, not only is there no factual basis for the making of the direction but such a direction would be unlawful for various reasons including procedural unfairness, irrationality, breach of section 149 Equality Act 2010, breach of section 6 Human Rights Act 1998 (a direction would be a disproportionate interference with residents' Article 10 ECHR rights), unlawful state aid and bias/predetermination.

The evidential basis for the proposed Direction

The sole basis for issuing the proposed direction is that the publication of WFN more than quarterly is somehow "damaging to the continuation of local independent media". However, the April representations explained that in relation to WFN there was absolutely no evidence to suggest that it damaged local independent media (see pages 2-3 of the April representations). The new notice failed to address the Council's evidence on this issue. Further, the Council requested the evidence base for such a conclusion in April. The Secretary of State has failed to provide any such evidence base to support this assertion.

In our letter of 29 September 2014, we referred to our earlier evidence and asked the Secretary of State to state whether he accepted or rejected this evidence and, if the latter, explain the basis for such a rejection. In the absence of any dispute, the Council stated that it would proceed on the basis that it was accepted. In your letter of 3 October 2014, no issue was taken with any of the Council's evidence on this matter and as such it must be taken to be accepted. Of course, if the Council had been informed that the Secretary of State disputed any of the factual statements made by the Council in its April representations it would have wished to make representations on such disputed facts. The Secretary of State's failure to respond on this issue has deprived the Council of any opportunity to make such representations.

Instead of considering the evidence provided, your letter of 3 October 2014 asserted that it was “self-evident” that an environment in which there are local authority newsheets is not as conducive to the flourishing of an independent press as an environment in which there are none. With respect, such a proposition is not “self-evident” (by which we understand the Secretary of State to be stating that he has no evidence to support it but it must be true because it is obvious). The proposition is contradicted, at least in relation to Waltham Forest, by all of the available evidence including circulation figures for the Waltham Forest Guardian which, whilst they show a steady decline over the last decade, do not show any additional decline in readership when the Council’s newspaper increased to 23 times per annum. Such evidence is consistent with the conclusions of the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee report on the “Proposed Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.” In their summary, the Committee stated:

“We found that there is little hard evidence to support the view of the commercial newspaper industry that Council publications are, to any significant extent, competing unfairly with independent newspapers at present...” (see further pages 14-18 of the Report on this issue).

The Council has been very careful to avoid unfairly competing with the Waltham Forest Guardian. It took a policy decision not to take classified or property advertisements which are often the biggest source of revenue for local newspapers. Further, it intentionally set its rate card higher than the Waltham Forest Guardian for the express purpose of avoiding competition. Further, as detailed in our April representations, the Council’s print contract is with Trinity Mirror, a local newspaper publisher. This contract provides important revenue for this local newspaper group which thus supports the local newspaper industry. Such support ensures the continuation of an independent and politically free local media rather than undermines it.

Until the Secretary of State examines the evidence in relation to the impact of free sheets generally, and WFN in particular, there is no basis for simply asserting that the independent media (i.e. the Waltham Forest Guardian) would be better off if WFN was only published quarterly.

Further, even if it could (contrary to the evidence) be assumed that there was some impact on the independent press there is no basis for concluding that such impact is any more than negligible. In such circumstances, making the proposed direction

would not be a proportionate response given the (undisputed) significant adverse financial consequences this would have on the Council (and thus Council tax payers) as well as the admitted significant adverse impact such any Direction would have on groups that share protected characteristics (including the disabled, the elderly, woman and various ethnic minorities).

Special circumstances

In the notice of a proposed direction of 25 September 2014 and again in your letter of 3 October 2014, you make reference to the fact that the majority of other local authorities already publish their newsheets no more frequently than quarterly “notwithstanding the wide range of groups that display protected characteristics in the areas of many councils.” The notice and 3 October 2014 letter invite representations from the Council as to whether there were any special circumstances that would justify more frequent publication in light what the majority of other local authorities apparently do.

Firstly, we are not aware of evidence in relation to the frequency of other local authorities’ publications generally (the Secretary of State has not provided the Council with any such evidence). We are aware that a number of local authorities, particularly local authorities in London and specifically in East London with similar characteristics as Waltham Forest, have formed the view that publishing free sheets more frequently than quarterly is the most cost efficient way of discharging their various statutory duties. As explained in the Council’s April representations, if the Council were to only publish WFN quarterly it would have to place advertisements either in the Waltham Forest Guardian or the Evening Standard. Both options would be significantly more expensive than the publication of WFN 23 times a year (which is broadly cost neutral as production costs are covered by advertising costs) (we note that the Secretary of State has not disputed the factual accuracy of the various factual statements on cost effectiveness made by the Council at pages 3-9 of its April representations).

In such circumstances, the Council’s present approach is by far the most cost effective and, if the Council were to reduce the frequency of publication, such a reduction would place it in breach of the provisions of the Code on cost effectiveness (particularly paragraphs 10 and 13: the requirement to publish statutory notices in local independent newspapers would, in such circumstances be a method of subsidising a commercial organisation namely the Waltham Forest Guardian). Further a mandatory

reduction of publication frequency in such circumstances would amount to an unlawful state aid. It would also be contrary to section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. It may well be that the position on cost effectiveness is not the same for all other local authorities when account is taken of the number of statutory notices that have to be published, the circulation of local commercial newspapers, and their advertising rates. Alternatively, it may be that such authorities are themselves acting, inter alia, in breach of the provisions of the Code on cost effectiveness, section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999.

Further and in the alternative, as detailed in our April representations, the Council has a unique demography which amounts to special circumstances justifying differential treatment. The majority of the population is from a non-White UK background. Over 25% of the population have English as a second language. The population has a very high turnover both internationally and inter-borough (see page 12 of the April representations). In light of, inter alia, the diverse population, there are particular issues in the Council's area relating to radicalisation and community cohesion (see page 13 of the April representations).

As detailed in its April 2014 representations, the Council is strongly of the view that any Direction would have a disproportionate adverse impact on various groups that have protected characteristics (including various ethnic groups, the disabled and woman) as the Council would be unable to effectively reach its diverse population and inform it of matters of importance (see further below on the duty on the Secretary of State to comply with his duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010). Any Direction would also undermine rather than advance equality of opportunity and damage rather than foster good relations between groups that share protected characteristics (we exhibit to this letter various responses from community groups to the proposed reduction in frequency of WFN to quarterly as **Appendix B**. Such responses, inter alia, detail the impact such a reduction would have on groups who share protected characteristics including women, the elderly and the disabled).

The Council is of the view that there is simply no other way that the Council can effectively reach its diverse population and promote community cohesion whilst reducing the risk of radicalisation. The Council notes that the Secretary of State has not disputed the factual accuracy of the matters set out in the April representations on this issue or suggested other ways in which the Council can effectively reach its

diverse population, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between, inter alia, the various ethnic groups. Thus, the proposed direction would make it very difficult, if not impossible, for the Council to comply with its duties under section 149 Equality Act 2010.

The lawfulness of a direction

In its April representations, the Council contended that if the Secretary of State rejected the Council's representations and made the proposed Direction, any such direction would be unlawful because it would be procedurally unfair, irrational, the Secretary of State has failed to take reasonable steps to inform himself of relevant information prior to issuing a proposed direction, was a disproportionate interference with residents' right to receive information on matters of public concern, was an unlawful State aid, was contrary to section 149 Equality Act 2010 and was vitiated by bias and/or predetermination. The Council is of the view that the Direction proposed in the notice of 25 September 2014 would be similarly unlawful for essentially the same reasons. The submissions set out below essentially update the April representations on the legality of any proposed notice and should be read together with the Council's earlier representations as the Council does not feel it necessary to repeat its previous submissions.

Procedural fairness

In the Secretary of State's notice of a proposed direction dated 25 September 2014, in the second paragraph the Secretary of State refers to having considered the Council's previous written representations and "other information available to him about the local authority's publicity". In the Council's letter of 29 September 2014 letter, we requested details of such "other information" so we could consider it and make any necessary representations on it. You have failed to provide details of such "other information" in response to this reasonable request. Further, in our letter of 25 September, we requested any evidence that the Secretary of State had in his possession to support the assertion that the publication of WFN more than quarterly is somehow "damaging to the continuation of the local independent media". In your response of 3 October you failed to provide any such evidence. Either no evidence exists and, in such circumstances, any Direction would be irrational or such evidence exists but you have failed to provide it to the Council preventing it from making meaningful representations. Either way the Secretary of State has acted unlawfully.

Bias/Predetermination

The Council's April representations detailed the evidence of bias and/or predetermination detailed various statements made by the Secretary of State which evidenced bias and/or predetermination. In a press release dated 26 September 2014, in the context of further notices of a proposed direction to, inter alia, Waltham Forest, it was again asserted that "Frequent town hall free sheets are...a waste of taxpayers' money". Given the undisputed evidence provided by the Council to the Secretary of State in April that WFN is the most cost effective way for the Council to meet its various statutory duties to publish statutory notices and other appropriate publicity, such a statement provides further evidence that the Secretary of State has a closed mind and/or would lead a fair minded and informed observer to conclude that there was a real possibility that he was biased.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Council notes that the Secretary of State has not carried out an Equality Impact Assessment prior to either his April 2014 notice of a proposed direction or his September 2014 notice. Whilst the Council accepts that there is no general requirement under section 149 Equality Act 2010 to carry out an EIA before exercising a function, it is good practice to do so particularly given the very significant adverse impact that the proposed direction would have on protected groups. Further, there is no evidence that the Secretary of State had discharged its section 149 duty by other means (the Council's letter of 29 September requested any documents evidencing the Secretary of State's consideration since April 2014 but no evidence has been provided). In light of this failure, it appears clear that the Secretary of State had failed to gather relevant information to enable him to discharge his section 149 Equality Act 2010, has failed to address his mind properly to relevant evidence and failed to have the necessary due regard appropriate in the circumstances.

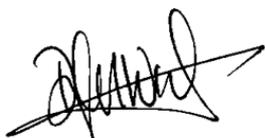
The readership breakdown of WFN, over the period January-July 2014, indicates that a higher percentage of woman than men read it. Similarly, a higher percentage of the elderly (65+) read it compared to those under 65. The figures also demonstrate that a higher percentage of non-White British persons than White British persons read it. Finally, the disabled are more likely to read WFN than the able-bodied. Thus, it is clear that any direction would have an adverse and disproportionate impact on such protected groups who cannot be reached in other ways (no doubt the Secretary of

State is aware of the relevant statistics on internet use (the only potentially effective alternative) by, inter alia, the elderly and the disabled.

The duty to comply with section 149 Equality Act 2010 when exercising his functions is on the Secretary of State. It is non-delegable. In such circumstances, the Council does not understand the reference in the notice of the proposed direction to the Council considering the public sector equality duty (the Council requested clarification of this reference but unfortunately your letter of 3 October 2014 failed to respond to this reasonable request). The Council is well aware of its duties in this field and has had regard to its duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010 (and the three predecessor duties) in deciding to publish WFN 23 times per annum and further in deciding not to move to only quarterly publication when the new Code of Practice came into force.

In conclusion, the Council submits that the Secretary of State should not make the proposed direction.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Fenwick', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel Fenwick
Director of Governance
London Borough of Waltham Forest

cc Martin Esom, Chief Executive

Appendix A

Governance Directorate

Director of Governance: Daniel Fenwick



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Date: 29 April 2014

Dear Mr Rowsell,

Written Representations made in respect of Notice of Statutory Direction under Section 4A(5) of the Local Government Act 1986

Introduction and summary

This document sets out the London Borough of Waltham Forest's ("the Council") representations in response to the Secretary of State's notice of a proposed direction under section 4A of the Local Government Act 1986 that was given on 16 April 2014. The proposed direction would require the Council to comply by no later than 1 May 2014 with all of the provisions of the Recommended Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

In summary, the Council submits that the Secretary of State should not make the proposed direction. The Council complies with every aspect of the Code of Practice other than the requirement not to publish newspapers more frequently than quarterly. The Department for Communities and Local Government ("CLG") has not referred to any evidence that supports an allegation that the Council is not complying with the remainder of the Code. The Council has had careful regard to the provisions of the Code as to frequency but has decided to publish its free newspaper ("Waltham Forest News" ("WFN")) more frequently than quarterly (23 times a year) because it is the most cost effective way for the Council to meet its various duties to publish statutory notices and other appropriate publicity. Such an approach is consistent with, inter alia, the Council's fiduciary duty to taxpayers to use its resources efficiently and its duties under section 149 Equality Act 2010. Requiring the Council to limit the



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publication of WFN to quarterly would serve no legitimate purpose at the present time: there is no evidence that WFN damages local newspapers. However, if the CLG relieved the Council of its obligation to publish statutory notices in newspapers, the Council would reduce the frequency of WFN.

Further, not only is there no factual basis for making the direction but such a direction would clearly be unlawful for a number of reasons including irrationality, procedural unfairness, unlawful state aid and bias/predetermination.

The reasons why a direction should not be made

The Council submits that there is no reason why the direction should be made. None of the correspondence from the CLG has clearly stated the reason why the CLG thinks that a direction may be appropriate. However, a press release issued by CLG suggested that in relation to the Council the reason for the direction was frequency and even-handedness. The Council, in a letter dated 23 April 2014, sought clarification of the reasons for the direction and what information it was based upon. Unfortunately, CLG in its response of 25 April 2014, failed to provide such clarification or information. It simply asserted that the information it based its decision upon was its policy, the previous consultation responses and the fact that the Secretary of State is aware that "your Council publishes a fortnightly newspaper, and that this has given rise to concerns about costs and wasting residents' money and about the impact this fortnightly publication has had on the local independent press." It is unclear whether the reference to wasting residents' money is a reference to "cost effectiveness" which was not referred to in the press release as a reason for issuing the proposed notice.

Below the Council addresses the issue of competition with the local independent press together with the various matters detailed in the Code of Practice.

Unfair competition with local newspapers

The Council understands that the asserted reason for the Code of Practice and the direction is that Council publications, including WFN, create unfair competition with local newspapers. The Council is unaware of any credible evidence to support this assertion generally or in relation to WFN and the main relevant local newspaper the Waltham Forest Guardian.

In relation to the general assertion, the current Code of Practice was amended in 2011. At the time of this amendment, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee concluded that there was no evidence to support the Secretary of State's assertion that council publications had had a negative impact on the local independent press. The Committee in effect asked the Secretary of State to provide evidence before amending the Code. The Secretary of State was unable to produce any evidence at the time and still has not done so despite numerous requests to do so.

In relation to the particular situation in the Council's area, we attach a spreadsheet and associated graph of the Waltham Forest Guardian's ABC verified circulation from December 2002 – December 2013 (**Appendix 1**). The picture that this shows is of a steady, regular decline in readership of around 1000 readers per annum. We have highlighted when the Council started to increase frequency of publication to 23 times per annum from mid-2007 (first as Waltham Forest Magazine and then from 2009 as Waltham Forest News). You will see there is no additional decline in readership associated with that change.

I understand that there is no evidence to suggest that where councils have ceased to produce their own newspapers this has revived the fortunes of local newspapers. In 2011, Hammersmith and Fulham ceased to publish H & F news transferring their advertising revenue to the local free Trinity Mirror title, Fulham and Hammersmith Chronicle. Notwithstanding this, the Chronicle's circulation fell from 81, 254 in 2011 to 45,490 in 2013, and we understand it is about to cease publication.

In such circumstances, there is no basis upon which the Secretary of State could rationally conclude that the fortnightly publication of WFN was having an impact on the local independent press. So far as we can make out from CLG's letter of 25 April 2014, the Secretary of State's present belief that there is such an impact is based upon one brief consultation response from a (possibly retired) journalist, who asserts that the business model of the (then) Walthamstow Guardian has been "destroyed by the deliberate activities of a hostile local authority". With respect to their author, these comments are palpable nonsense in the light of the evidence set out in these representations. They certainly provide no sensible evidential basis for a statutory direction, and it is remarkable that the Secretary of State, apparently without doing anything to verify them, should single out comments of this nature as the basis upon which he proposes to act. It may be noted in passing that no such assertion appears to have been made in consultation by the publishers of the Waltham Forest Guardian.

Cost effectiveness

Neither the proposed direction nor the more informative press release suggest that the Council is in breach of the principle of cost effectiveness. This is clearly correct as the publication of WFN is cost effective.

The Code requires the Council to be able to confirm that consideration has been given to value for money in relation to all publicity, including the consideration of alternatives. The Council are confident, having considered the matter carefully, that the publication of WFN provides value for money and is the best available means of meeting its statutory duty under s.3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to achieve best value in the provision of its services.

By providing near universal coverage of households in the borough, WFN provides the most effective way of communicating with all residents. The newspaper allows Council, other public sector partners and community groups to communicate with Waltham Forest's 258,200 residents. It reduces and, in places, eliminates the need for other publicity, such as leaflets and flyers about services and events. WFN has an ABC (industry standard) verified free letterbox delivery of 97,479 copies to residents and 4,000 copies to businesses.

The Code requires consideration of alternatives before spending money on its own publicity. In this borough, the only other newspaper which covers Waltham Forest and has an ABC verified rating is the Waltham Forest Guardian (another small newspaper, the Yellow Advertiser, has no such rating and has not had since 2000. Its self-declared circulation is 14,000).

The Waltham Forest Guardian (the Guardian) is a paid-for title which has a circulation of 4802 (less than 5% of WFN's verified circulation). Further, over a third of the Guardian's distribution is in Chingford, the most affluent area in the borough. Chingford (which comprises approximately 26% of the population) is also the least diverse area (see Equality and Diversity below). Thus, it is clear that switching from WFN to the Guardian would have a disproportionate impact on various groups with protected characteristics.

On any reasonable view, there is no comparison in terms of the coverage. WFN's quality and effectiveness can also be demonstrated by the fact that it won the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Local Public Service Publication of the Year in 2013. The Judges said:

With an editorial team of just one, Waltham Forest Council succeeded in publishing a fortnightly tabloid newspaper that not only looks professional and appealing but its regarded by residents as genuinely informative and useful to them in their engagement with the council. This strong resident focused publication aims to put a call to action within every story and regularly uses extensive cover wraps and centre page pull outs to highlight stories of particular interest and importance to its readership. For example, the campaigns against racism and gang violence. In 2012 it rose to the occasion to reflect Waltham Forest's status as a host borough for the Olympic Games by increasing the newspaper's frequency from fortnightly to weekly during the six weeks surrounding the games. Added to all that, Waltham Forest is totally self-funded by advertising sales

This demonstrates external recognition of WFN's value to Waltham Forest and its residents.

The Council accepts that the mass coverage of WFN would be of limited value unless it can demonstrate that it is an effective means of informing residents about Council and partner services and events. Data collected from the June-July 2013 wave of our Residents Insight Survey shows that three in four residents (74%) have read Waltham Forest News within the last six months.

- The majority of the residents who have read WFN (85%) find the newspaper useful (up from 72% in March 2011 and from 81% in May 2012).

- Three in four readers (75%) feel that it tells them what they need to know about the Council and its services (up from 65% in March 2011).
- Residents who read Waltham Forest News are significantly more likely to feel informed about the services and benefits the Council provides (71%), compared to those who do not read the paper (41%).

(Data from June-July 2013 Resident Insight Survey).

The Council accepts there is a cost to producing WFN but believes that this provides value for money. Value for money must be assessed in context. A key factor for Waltham Forest in deciding to publish 23 times per year is the outdated legislative framework that requires local authorities to publish the vast majority of statutory notices (for planning, highways and other functions) in a newspaper circulating in its local area, in our case Waltham Forest.

Without WFN, this creates an inevitable and considerable cost in paying for advertising space in an ineffective monopoly provider, the Waltham Forest Guardian. As a paid for newspaper with a circulation of just under 5000, the Guardian reaches 2% of the borough’s population and its readership is the self-selecting generally more affluent group of those who choose to buy the newspaper. The contrast with WFN’s penetration could not be starker.

In terms of cost, a statutory direction would force the Council to spend taxpayers’ money on statutory notices in the Guardian newspaper as a monopoly supplier in the borough.

It is difficult to estimate the precise cost the Council and taxpayers would incur for this. In part, this is due to the fact that the Guardian has refused to give us a rate card or an estimation of their charges for public notice. In no other circumstances would the Council would procure services from a provider who refused to provide full transparency on their prices in advance.

We have therefore compared the costs from 2006 when the Council last paid for statutory notices in the Guardian compared to current (i.e. 2014) prices in WFN.

Overall, in January to October 2006, the Council spend £236,000 on advertising space in the Guardian, the vast majority for statutory notices. We cite three actual examples from 2006 below with their comparative WFN costs below.

Notice	Guardian Cost 2006 (actual)	WFN cost (2014)
Traffic Calming notice 22 June 2006, 25cm x 5 columns	£3020.16	£1061.65
Planning Notice 3 August 2006,	£1022.21	£466.95

18cm x 6 columns

Dog Control Order, 18 May
2006, 34cm x 6 columns

£1443.30

£297.15

The difference is apparent. It is also highly unlikely that the Guardian's rates have dropped to this degree in the past 8 years. They are likely to have gone up at least by inflation. The effect of the proposed statutory direction would be for the Council to be forced to pay these rates or, indeed, whatever rates the Guardian sets.

The overall costs will of course vary with the number and size of notices but it is not unreasonable for the Council to have to budget for £250,000 per annum on statutory notices. Moreover, as stated, as a monopoly provider, there would also be no check on the Guardian's ability to set its own prices for statutory notices to subsidise its falling sales.

The Council considers that in Waltham Forest the effect of a Statutory Direction would place it in direct breach of paragraph 13 of the Code, which states: *The purchase of advertising space should not be used as a method of subsidising voluntary, public or **commercial organisations*** (our emphasis). It is also likely to give rise to illegal state aid (see below). The Council does not consider that the Evening Standard is a realistic alternative as this would increase the estimated costs. The Evening Standard costs on average £18,000 plus VAT per page to advertise. In some editions, the Council has three to four pages of public notices. The Standard is simply not a viable or cost effective alternative.

The truth of the matter is that the answer to saving taxpayers' money in local authority publicity – a goal we all share - is in the hands of the Secretary of State. If the requirement to publish statutory notices in printed newspapers was removed and allow them to be published on its website, Waltham Forest would be able to stop publishing WFN fortnightly. The rationale for the Secretary of State's reluctance to take this simple step is unclear when at the same time and with our full support, he is embracing digital communication to open up Council meetings and decisions to scrutiny via filming, blogging and internet publication.

The Council would be very likely to be in breach of its general duty to achieve best value by purchasing services from an ineffective provider with no competition.

The Council accepts that publishing WFN 23 times per year creates a cost to the Council that exceeds the cost of statutory notices. The cost including design, printing, distribution and staffing for 23 editions in 2013/14 was £417,600. However, statutory notices are not the only publicity that the Council needs to issue. In such circumstances, the Council is confident that if the direction is made, the Council will be required to spend more than £417,600 on publicity.

The Council has been provided with quotes for the design, printing and distribution of a quarterly publication. These quotes – which, we are confident, are competitive - indicate a cost of £42,942 per issue or £171,770 per annum. Under a change to quarterly publication, we would then have to pay at least £250,000 per annum to publish statutory notices leading to an overall cost of approximately £420,000 of ratepayer's money whilst publish 19 fewer editions.

Moreover, fortnightly production of WFN provides economies of scale to the whole of the Council's publicity that would be lost by a reduction to quarterly publication as such publicity is necessary. Examples over the past 2 years when the Code has been in force would include:

- The Council's schools holidays activities programme which are advertised via pull outs in Waltham Forest News at least five times per year. These include childcare and activities for families, children and young people and often run to sixteen pages. Without timeous publications these would revert to being printed leaflets, printed and distributed at a far higher cost.
- Regular campaigns are run in Waltham Forest News to promote the Council's weekly waste and recycling services. These promote recycling, remind residents of their waste collection days, prompt residents to use our free bulky waste service and notify holiday changes throughout the year. Without timeous publications these would revert to being printed leaflets, printed and distributed at a far higher cost.
- Free Christmas dinners for 1000 senior citizens are only advertised in WFN and are regularly oversubscribed in a few days of publication. Our latest insight survey showed that 44% of over 65's knew about the dinners; which could only have been from WFN.
- Waltham Forest's Adult Learning Service promote their back to work, vocational and development courses regularly throughout the year in pull outs in Waltham Forest News. Without timeous publications these would revert to being printed leaflets, printed and distributed at a far higher cost.

These publicity costs are currently absorbed into WFN but would now need to be produced separately at greater unit cost. The cost to design, print and distribute an A4 leaflet would cost approximately £7,725 as opposed to £1,250 for a full page advert in Waltham Forest News.

It is difficult to estimate at this point how many additional leaflets and other publications would be required but we reasonably believe that the overall costs would exceed the current cost of Waltham Forest News.

We have shared contracts with four other authorities for the printing and distribution of Waltham Forest News and are confident we get the best possible deal. We also have the smallest staff of any borough who run a regular newspaper and all of the paper's costs are paid for by advertising which means

that services which have no need to communicate do not make a fixed contribution to the paper.

The proposed direction takes no account of the financial impact on the Council (and therefore council taxpayers) of prohibiting the current frequency of publication of WFN. Further, the proposed direction provides no means for the Council to negotiate variation or early termination of contracts, creating unnecessary cost to the public purse.

It is worth noting that a local newspaper group, Trinity Mirror, print Waltham Forest News. They hold a joint contract with Waltham Forest and three other boroughs worth £4 million over 4 years. Thus, the direction would have an adverse impact on local newspaper groups and local newspapers.

Based on the figures above, WFN costs approximately £1.42 per resident per annum. No alternative method of communications, particularly local newspapers, offers such value for money considering Waltham Forest News's circulation reaches every home and business and it is able to publicise a wide range of Council and community issues.

Over time, we are looking to move to digital communication for our publicity but full digital by default is a number of years away. The current proposed direction provides no means of transition and does not address the equality issues we have identified below.

The benefits of publicity are not limited to the Council. Waltham Forest News offers free promotion of community events and statutory partners which it is reasonable to believe otherwise would not exist at all or to the same level. Every edition includes free publicity to community groups:

- a two page "What's On" spread
- A full page community focus on one of the four neighbourhoods (Leytonstone, Leyton, Chingford and Walthamstow) featuring one in-depth article and three news in brief items on clubs/groups in the area.

There are regular features on other public sector agencies, including the Police (e.g. detailed covered following the 2011 riots) and the latest edition's front page features promotion of a London Fire Brigade campaign.

Following receipt of the Secretary of State's notice we asked our database of over 100 community organisations for their comments on reducing the frequency of WFN publication. Our request and responses to date are attached at **Appendix 2** and clearly demonstrate, in our view, the loss to the community if the proposed direction is imposed.

You will note that our request was open-minded in referring to the Secretary of State's press release and not simply seeking supportive comments.

We believe that this provides additional value for money to the public purse and promotes localism.

Objectivity

The Council considers that it is in compliance with this principle and the Notice does not state otherwise.

We have reviewed WFN since the introduction of the 2011 Code and can see no evidence that, taken as a whole, the publication does not meet the expected standards.

The Code expressly allows councils to set out their views and reasons for holding those views but we also ensure that reporting is "*balanced and factually accurate*". We are confident that WFN complies with this.

The Council considers also that its campaigns comply with the requirements of paragraph 16 of the Code: *Local authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy.*

Our campaigns have been directly linked to research into residents' views of their priorities for the borough, not party politics. The Council's priorities were developed via our Residents Insight Programme. This programme involves qualitative and quantitative research about the views and needs of local residents. The quantitative research is run by BMG Research and centred upon interviews with 500 residents, who are demographically and geographically representative of the borough. The priorities were then agreed following a mass conversation with residents in 2012 in which 1500 residents participated. This consultation was exclusively communicated to residents via Waltham Forest News.

Any review of WFN since 2011 will demonstrate that advertising is clearly marked as such and the other provisions in Paragraph 17 and 18 are not in issue.

We also consider that the principle of objectivity is closely linked to "even-handedness" and that the fact that WFN is objective is also evidence that it is "even-handed".

Even-handedness

The press release but not the Notice or the CLG correspondence alleges that the Council is in breach of this principle of the Code. However, the CLG has refused, in its letter of 25 April 2014, to give any proper explanation of the purported evidential basis for this assertion. We consider this to be an extremely regrettable and irresponsible approach which increases our concerns as to whether this decision is being taken with an open mind. Certainly it has

deprived us of the opportunity to address specifically in these representations any alleged evidence of specific breaches of the Code.

We are confident, however, that any serious examination of WFN demonstrates even-handedness within the meaning of the Code.

As to WFN, we do not consider the provisions with regard to blogs and third party publicity to be relevant (paragraphs 22 to 25).

The two remaining provisions are paragraphs 19 and 20, set out below:

19. Where local authority publicity addresses matters of political controversy it should seek to present the different positions in relation to the issue in question in a fair manner.

20. Other than in the circumstances described in paragraph 34 of this code, it is acceptable for local authorities to publicise the work done by individual members of the authority, and to present the views of those individuals on local issues. This might be appropriate, for example, when one councillor has been the "face" of a particular campaign. If views expressed by or attributed to individual councillors do not reflect the views of the local authority itself, such publicity should make this fact clear.

The Council does publicise the work of individual councillors but within clear limits relating to their areas of responsibilities. For example, executive members will lead publicity in their area. Also, ward councillors (of whichever party) are invited to publicity events in their wards. The Council complies fully with the requirements of paragraph 34 relating to election "purdah". A copy of this year's advice to managers on this issue is attached as evidence of this. Therefore the publicity of councillors is within the remit of the Code.

WFN does address matters of concern to residents and relating to policies but in an even-handed way. For example, our recent handling of a formal consultation on the selective licensing of private sector rented properties is an example of even-handed presentation. The result of this publicity is that we have received over 1500 consultation responses, which the Council is now considering. This consultation was almost exclusively communicated to residents via Waltham Forest News.

We also refer you to the contents of our consultation response which sets out examples of publicity issued in WFN that demonstrates compliance with the objectivity and even-handedness principles.

We have attached a selection of articles and features from the last 4 years of WFN, which can be categorised as follows:

1. **Even-handedness:** articles including Government ministers (including Theresa May, James Brokenshire and Bob Neill); local MPs including Iain Duncan-Smith; and a number of stories featuring Boris Johnson as Mayor of London. These articles show clear objectivity in reporting of Government ministers and decisions. These are of course outweighed by articles featuring the Council's Labour administration but this is clearly permitted by paragraph

20 of the Code. Whilst WFN ensures there is cross-party coverage where justified by the facts, it is mindful that s.2 of the 1986 Act applies to all political parties, irrespective of whether that party is in the Council's administration or not **(Appendix 3)**.

2. **"Negative" articles:** WFN has not shied away from addressing two of the Council's major cuts over the past administration, Library closures and the closure of customer service shops. Finally, WFN features a "vox pop" of local residents on a topical local issue. The views expressed are the residents' own and regularly feature criticism of the Council e.g. *The Council should do more about...* WFN also does not shy away from featuring topics that are negative such as the borough's gang problem, crime or anti-social behaviour. **(Appendix 4)**
3. **Campaigns:** details of recent campaigns focussed on WFN publicity. It is clear from subject matter the campaigns are non-controversial, e.g. William Morris Gallery (which was subsequently Museum of the Year 2013), adoption, breakfast clubs, recycling and the aim of each campaign is stated clearly as to inform, not to persuade. **(Appendix 5)**

These real examples counter with actual evidence the unsubstantiated consultation response (news staff 2) relied on by the Secretary of State to justify the proposed Notice. We also enclose a letter from Boris Johnson praising the Council's campaign against the EDL marches in 2012 that were led in WFN **(Appendix 6)**.

Whilst Waltham Forest will not shy away from controversial matters – because they are important to our residents – the truth is that the vast majority of the content of WFN is non-controversial and provides information on Council services, public and voluntary sector activities, achievement of our residents and "What's On" style information. There is no pretence to cover current affairs or otherwise parody a commercial newspaper. Therefore, any serious consideration of even-handedness should place into context the balance of volume of "controversial" and non-controversial items.

CLG's letters of 22 and 25 April 2014 refer to the responses to the CLG 2013 consultation as forming part (apparently a significant part) of the supposed evidence base upon which the decision to issue a proposed direction was based. The Council have considered this feedback. There appear to be two such consultation responses from individuals only one of which touches on the issue of even-handedness (a third response, from an organisation, simply repeats what are evidently the same comments from one of these individuals). This response (which is hardly from an unbiased source, as its title News Staff 2 indicates) is nothing more than assertion unsupported by any evidence. Further, it is not factually accurate. As detailed above, WFN does, as detailed elsewhere in these representations, address unpopular subjects. It also includes criticism of the Council from residents.

In summary, we cannot see any evidence to justify the proposed Notice and consider that WFN complies with the Code in respect of even-handedness.

Equality and diversity

Paragraphs 31 and 32 of the Code allows the Council to use publicity to influence “*in accordance with the relevant law and in a way which they consider positive) the attitudes of local people or public behaviour in relation to matters of health, safety, crime prevention, race relations, equality, diversity and community issues.*”

Taking into account the demography of Waltham Forest and the priorities of its residents, the Council considers WFN is a very useful tool in meeting these provisions of the Code and that the frequency of publication helps to ensure that “hard to reach” groups receive information about Council, public sector and voluntary sector activities.

The Secretary of State will know that Waltham Forest is a very diverse borough. In terms of ethnicity, a majority of the population is from a non-White UK background. The main ethnic groups are Asian (21%); Black / Black British (17%) and White Other (15%) of which 9% are East European. For 26% of the population, English is a second language. Approximately 6% of the borough describes themselves as disabled and there is an equal split of men and women.

There are also demographic challenges faced by Waltham Forest in delivering its services. Waltham Forest has particular challenges in relation to the mobility and diversity of its population.

The borough’s population increased by 18% between 2001 and 2011; higher than the London average of 14%.¹ In relation to population churn, the long-term international migration turnover (sum of in and out-migration) per 1,000 resident population in Waltham Forest (33.9), more than double the national average (14.1). The volume of people moving in or out of the borough from other parts of the UK (124.1 per 1,000 residents in 2012) is significantly higher than the average internal migration turnover in London (55.2) and the national average (3.9). The number of National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK has consistently been higher in Waltham Forest than across London (in 2012, it was 54.1 compared to 36.9 per 1,000 resident population aged 16 to 64).²

This makes communication with residents particularly difficult. Mobile and diverse communities are likely to have few ties to a local area. The importance

¹ Source - Census

² Source: ONS Local Migration indicators

of placing plain English crystal marked Council information directly through people's doors is heightened in such a mobile population.

Waltham Forest was assigned Prevent priority status following the Trans-Atlantic airline bomb plot in 2006, and continues to be one of London's priority areas as assessed through police intelligence and risk mapping. The Council work closely with the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) to engage with statutory and community partners to manage and mitigate some of this risk, particularly through targeted work with vulnerable individuals and institutions.

Waltham Forest News is actively used to promote community cohesion and responsible citizenship and we see the paper as crucial to our efforts to ensure the area continues to enjoy good community relations.

Waltham Forest News has been used to ensure that community cohesion is maintained, often in difficult circumstances. When the far-right group the English Defence League (EDL) proposed to march through Waltham Forest twice in two months, we used the paper to alleviate tensions within the borough as well as calling on residents to stay away from counter-protests. Through the paper we were able to promote positive messages about the borough as we outlined alternative ways in which the community to come together and demonstrate their unity.

We know as well that the paper reaches a more representative section of our community than the local paid for title. The paper is particularly effective at reaching residents from black, minority and ethnic (BME) backgrounds in comparison to other local commercial newspapers.

More than half of those aged 16-29 have read WFN during the last six months (57%), while in all other age groups the proportion of reading WFN is at least four in five.

BAME residents are more likely to think that WFN is useful (87% compared to 84% of White residents). They are also more likely to agree that WFN tells them what they need to know about the Council and its services (80% compared 72%).

To ensure accessibility for those with English as a second language or with poor reading skills, WFN has been awarded the Plain English Campaign Crystal Mark for five years running. We also send a braille or tape version to blind and partially sighted residents.

The proposed direction would have a significant adverse effect on the Council's ability to communicate with all groups and, inter alia, promote good race relations, equality and diversity. It would thus make it harder for the Council to comply with its duties under section 149 Equality Act 2010, to when carrying

out its functions have due regard to the need to eliminate discretion, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Appropriate use of publicity

The Council does not consider it is in breach of any aspect of this Principle except for frequency of publication at paragraph 28. Neither the proposed Notice nor the correspondence from the CLG suggests otherwise.

The Council addressed the issue of appropriate use of publicity in its consultation response but to summarise:

- Paragraphs 26 and 27 of the Code are not relevant.
- Paragraph 29 of the Code is addressed above under equality and diversity.
- Any serious examination of WFN would show that it is clearly branded as the local authority's publication throughout and does not pretend to be a commercial newspaper as set out in paragraph 30.

Lawfulness

We do not consider that there is any issue under this principle and the Notice and correspondence from the CLG do not suggest otherwise. The Council has clear powers to publish its own newspaper to its residents not least under s.1 of the Localism Act 2011. There has been no suggestion that the Council is in breach of any of the provisions in paragraphs 5 to 9 of the Code.

As stated above, the Council has never received a formal complaint about the lawfulness of WFN.

Conclusions

The Council accepts that it breaches the Code's provision on frequency of publication (but no other provision of the Code) but as detailed above this departure from the guidance is for good reason. The Council maintains that any rational consideration of WFN demonstrates that it delivers:

- Effective communication with 98,000 households in the borough by means of a single medium avoiding the additional costs and confusion and inefficiency of multiple publications, leaflets etc.
- Cost effectiveness by the most efficient use of taxpayers' money that the Council is forced by outdated legislation to spend on publishing statutory notices in a printed newspaper.
- Delivering effective communication in the views of residents – as evidenced by the research cited above.

- Ensures communication with otherwise hard to reach groups, helping to deliver the Council's public sector equality duty.

In reaching its position of publishing WFN 23 times per year, the Council has balanced these factors against the impact of reducing publication to 4 times per year. The evidence above is that this would not deliver value for money by increasing unit costs; requiring the Council to publish the same service information by other means than a universal newspaper at increased cost; requiring the Council to publish statutory notices in a publication that is only bought by 2% of the population (who are unrepresentative of the local population) with no control over costs.

It achieves these aims and ensures that the content of WFN is objective and even-handed. There is no coherent evidential basis to suggest otherwise; CLG has not pointed to any evidence (as opposed to inaccurate assertion) notwithstanding the Council's request to do so.

There is therefore no good reason to make any direction at all. There is certainly no good reason to make the direction proposed, which would place the Council under a mandatory obligation, with immediate effect, to comply strictly with the entirety of the Code. The Secretary of State has provided no proper explanation of why such a direction is contemplated. CLG's letter of 25 April 2014 merely states that "there are concerns about more than merely the frequency of publication". That is no reason to make a whole Code direction, not qualified in terms of any specific steps that are or are not to be taken, in circumstances where (so far as the Council is aware) no concerns have been expressed which relate to anything other than the Waltham Forest News. In circumstances where the suggestion is that the Waltham Forest News has infringed particular paragraphs of the Code, any direction ought to be couched accordingly.

This is particularly important because the Code was drafted simply as guidance to local authorities, and much of it therefore simply makes recommendations in rather imprecise terms wholly inappropriate to what the Secretary of State is now proposing in effect to turn into a mandatory statutory duty: see for example paragraph 29. Indeed, there are many provisions of the Code which might in certain circumstances be thought to point in different directions (for example, paragraphs 13 and 28). It is wrong in principle for the Secretary of State to place the Council under obligations which are wholly unclear and even conflicting.

The lawfulness of a direction

If the Secretary of State accepts the Council's representations and decides not to make a direction no issue will arise as to the lawfulness of the direction. However, if the Secretary of State rejects such representations and makes the proposed Direction, the Council is clear that any such direction would be unlawful for the following reasons.

Procedural Unfairness

The Secretary of State has sought representations from the Council on whether or not to make a direction. To enable the Council to effectively make such representations, the Secretary of State is required to provide, at least in summary, the factual basis that has led him to consider making a direction and the evidence that may be said to support it. The Secretary of State has failed to provide the necessary information and/or evidence. In particular, neither the proposed direction nor the correspondence from CLG detail in any useful way the basis for the proposed direction. The Council will if necessary contend that the Notice is defective and void on these grounds, and the approach taken is certainly procedurally unfair. If there is really is nothing more to the Secretary of State's thinking than has already been disclosed, then any decision taken on this basis would certainly be irrational and flawed by a failure to acquaint himself properly with the facts.

The Secretary of State refers enigmatically to "*the circumstances of your Council to the extent he is aware of them*". This is wholly inadequate: the Council is entitled to know the grounds of the Secretary of State's decision.

Irrationality

Any direction would, in light of the representations set out above be irrational. In particular:

- i) such a direction would require the Council to spend more money on publicity than it currently does on WFN. Given that one of the stated concerns of the Secretary of State is waste of taxpayers' money a decision to issue a direction which would have the consequence of wasting taxpayer's money would be irrational;
- ii) there is no credible evidence to support the concern that the publication of WFN damages independent newspapers. Issuing a direction purported for the purpose of protecting such newspapers would therefore be irrational;
- iii) requiring the Council to publish WFN no more than quarterly would place the Council at risk of breaching various statutory duties including s 149 Equality Act 2010 and s 3 of the Local Government Act 1999.

The Secretary of State's approach does not represent a legitimate approach to the exercise of discretion in the light of the structure of the statutory provisions and the purposes for which the Code was introduced.

Tameside/Failure to properly inform

Prior to taking any decision, the Secretary of State is not only required to direct himself properly as to the nature and scope of his decision-making function, but it is also required to take reasonable steps to acquaint itself with the relevant information to enable it properly to perform the relevant function, see *R v Secretary of State for Education and Science v Tameside MBC* [1977] AC 1014, HL. In breach of this obligation, the Secretary of State failed to inform himself of relevant information prior to issuing a proposed direction. In particular, he failed to inform himself whether or not there was any rational basis for deciding that WFN was not complying with the even-handedness provisions of the Code (which from the CLG press release appears to be his conclusion). For the avoidance of doubt, the Council contends that one sentence in one representation about WFN unsupported by any evidence is not an adequate factual basis for such a conclusion.

Article 10 ECHR/Proportionality

The Council's residents have an Article 10 ECHR right, inter alia, to receive information on matters of public concern including the Council's activities and services, see eg *Open Door Counselling and Dublin Well Woman v Ireland* (1992) 15 EHRR 244. WFN currently provides residents with such information. A direction requiring the Council to only publish WFN quarterly would interfere with such a right both by itself and read with Article 14 ECHR (as the interference would have a disproportionate impact on certain protected groups). Such an interference would not be proportionate to a legitimate aim particularly given the lack of evidence that WFN damages local newspapers or that it is poor value for money.

Unlawful State aid

The point is made above that a direction would force the Council to spend very substantial sums on advertising in a local newspaper owned by a private undertaking, in a way which is neither commercially desired nor commercially justifiable. This must certainly amount to unlawful state aid.

Public Sector equality duty

As detailed above, restricting the Council to quarterly publication of WFN will have very significant implications for the ability of various groups with protected characteristics (including, but not limited to, race, religion, disability and sex) within the borough to access information, including the information that they need to access services effectively. Further, as detailed above, restricting the Council to quarterly publication of WFN will also damage its ability to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations. There is no evidence that the Secretary of State has had due regard to this issue prior to deciding to issue a proposed direction; the Council requests that the Secretary of State provide any Equality Impact Assessment carried out prior to issuing the proposed direction. At present it appears that the Secretary of State has not assessed the impact on members of relevant groups who would otherwise have obtained information

through Waltham Forest News and would be less able to do so as a result of the proposed direction. The very limited time available for making these representations has certainly not allowed us to make good this deficiency in the Secretary of State's analysis, even if it was the Council's job to do so. In such circumstances, any direction will be unlawful.

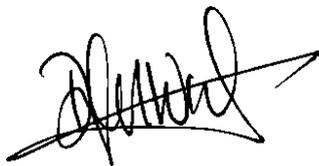
Bias

The Council is of the view that in light of the Secretary of State's recent conduct and, in particular, various statements made by the Secretary of State about "Town Hall Pravdas" and "propaganda on the rates [which] drives the free press out of business. Only Putin would be proud of a record like that" the Secretary of State is disqualified from deciding whether to issue a direction on the grounds of actual and/or apparent bias.

For the reasons set out above, the Secretary of State should not give the proposed direction, and it would not be lawful for him to do so. If he does give a direction, he should give reasons for rejecting the points made in these representations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information or clarification of the points we have made.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Fenwick', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel Fenwick
Director of Governance,
London Borough of Waltham Forest.

Cc Martin Esom, Chief Executive

Appendix B

Dear Waltham Forest News Contributor

You may be aware that earlier this year the national Government changed the law relating to the way that Councils can communicate with their residents. The law gives the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government the power to direct Councils to comply with all of the Code of Recommended Practice on Publicity.

Last week the Government wrote to us again, saying that they are minded to ask us to reduce publication of Waltham Forest News to 4 times a year from January. The Government's reasons for this can be found on the DCLG's website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government>

We now have until 9 October to make representations to the Government, outlining why Waltham Forest News (WFN) should be able to continue in its current format.

We consider that one of the major impacts of this will be on community groups and their ability to publicise their work and news to residents and hard to reach groups. It is unlikely, in our view, that we will be able to continue supporting community groups in this way if Waltham Forest News moves to quarterly publication.

It's up to you but if you think that Waltham Forest News has been important to you, your voluntary group/organisation or work in the community and the community you support, please let us know. What we would like to know is in a few words:

- a. The nature of your group, the work it does and the communities it supports, for example ethnic minorities, women, disabled people, specific age groups, LGBT or religious communities.
- b. How WFN has supported your organisation and the community
- c. The impact of reducing publication from every 2 weeks to every 13 weeks.

Due to the deadline the Government has imposed on our response, we really need to hear from you by **7 October**, even if this is an initial response that can be then followed up by more detailed information.

We want to make sure that Mr Pickles hears from our residents when we respond to him, so we'll be including quotes from community spokespeople in our representation.

Please do not feel obliged to help and if you agree with the Government, let us know too – we are always happy to hear all opinions.

Many thanks

Waltham Forest News

leo42@hotmail.co.uk

Hi Emily,

We are a walking group and have been established twelve years. Our membership has grown steadily and we believe it has been of benefit to a great many people, people who otherwise may not have enjoyed all what our group offers. Healthy exercise, enjoyment of the forest and surrounding areas and the company of others they may not have met. Add to this a social side and you have a recipe for success.

Waltham Forest's newsletter has supported us, and through the advertising they offer we have reached many more people. The publication is recognised and eagerly received.

We feel as a group our recruitment will suffer if the newsletter is reduced in number of publications. This could result in many residents missing out on group activities. The newsletter is a positive thing in peoples lives. Please let it continue it's regular issues.

Pauline Macfarlane(Publicity Officer)
Lea Valley Friends Walking Group

info@arlenedunkley-wood.co.uk

To whom this may concern,

I have been a teacher of prenatal yoga and Active Birth Workshops in the Waltham Forest Area for over 23 years. I took over the class from a colleague who used to work in Leyton for WF Adult Education. I continued teaching for WF AEd for a while before setting up local sessions for local women and their families.

The Waltham Forest News has been invaluable for my local business to reach local women and families so that they get access to prenatal yoga and other informed classes and workshops that will help them prepare for their births and enhance their bond and parenting.

Anecdotally most of the women who have attended my classes have gone onto have very empowering birth experiences, whether they were natural or assisted. These women gained a fare bit of personal support through meeting local pregnant women and many have developed deep friendships.

I pride myself that many of these women have come back in subsequent pregnancies and have recommended my services to local friends and families.

Through the WFNews I am able to contact more people in the area for the services that I offer my community. I pay quite a lot in venue, and don't make a income beyond minimum wage. But it is my passion for this work and the empowerment of women and their families that make my work most worthwhile.

If the issue of WFN were to change to quarterly issues this would not inform local people in good time to book up for sessions that are available to them. As as it is the Events page is limited in who they allocate space to, this would obviously create more of constraint on space availability for local businesses to be published.

Please reverse this decision. I am sure the fact that local people access this information and it guides them on what is happening locally, keeping it fresh in their minds is what is important. Creating a good source of communication between government, council and public.

doreen.harding@ellipsis.co.uk

Dear Emily,

This is in response to your request for opinions on Waltham Forest News and its continuation in its present format.

As a member of both The College Amateur Operatic Society (CAOS) and the Leyton Sports Ground Management Committee, I have taken advantage of the 'What's On' column and know that people read it from various feedback conversations.

As the local libraries appear reluctant to support the various groups & communities in regard to displaying flyers as a means of promotion even though most groups participating are run by volunteers, the WFN does give an opportunity for people to be made aware of activities within their borough.

Many people complain that the WFN is a propaganda tool for the local council and, in part, I agree with this. I do get rather tired of seeing only images of Cllrs Robbins and Loakes knowing that there are many other councillors who are dedicated to helping people but are never mentioned.

A fairer distribution of aims and achievements of other councillors would help to take away that reputation. The councillors represent all parties not only Labour. The political party should not be the main priority whoever is featured. This is local government not national.

It would be interesting to know what influence the current council has in what is and what is not included in its pages.

The other item which is featured is the opinions of local residents on what the Council is achieving. Again, a slant on the good points and not the less favourable. Invariably, the residents approached live in either Chingford or Walthamstow not

Leyton or Leytonstone which gives a very one-sided and unrealistic view of what is happening in the borough and the circumstances in which people exist.

As a means of informing people on local matters, it is useful but the spread should be wider and not dedicated to one political party.

My very best regards

Doreen Harding

alison@shapeshifter-productions.com

Dear Jenny,

I'd like to state how important Waltham Forest News has been to our charities' work over the last 5 years. Without the What's On Listings and the circulation of the paper, Strung Out violin group and Dick Smith's banjos and ukulele classes would not have been so accessible to the residents of Walthamstow and surrounding areas, particularly in the early days, when we could not afford to advertise elsewhere. Strung Out's main source of promoting the classes is through this paper. It is informative and a constant source of information for the residents. It is invaluable and unrealistic to say that communities do not need a regular paper of this kind. It is also a very useful tool for small organisations to promote their work-surely this is a positive?

Our classes are for adults, encouraging them to pick up an old hobby or learn a new one. We have been told by our students that we have inspired and boosted people's confidences and skills, by creating a musical and diverse community, bringing together well over 100 adults to play together. Walthamstow Acoustic Massive has formed as a direct result of attracting all these people to us. We have since been awarded The BBC Performing Arts Community Fund and Arts Council England funding to promote performances at festivals in East London-some of which was covered by WF News. People have thanked us time and again for the opportunities we are providing-and most of them learnt about us through this free local paper being pushed through their letter box.

Music participation improves well-being, teaches new skills and brings communities together. Our motto is "It's never too late" and as we are all living longer, then we intend to continue promoting this ethos-although it would be much harder to spread the word and provide these opportunities that enrich people's lives without this paper. Please visit this link to see the fruits of our work: <http://youtu.be/rWJHT5FeuhU>

As our borough is becoming increasingly pro-active in health and cultural activities, reducing the publications of WF News would be so counterproductive. Surely building communities and communicating with the public you represent is a positive tool?

Save Waltham Forest News!

Kind regards,

Alison Jones

Artistic Director, Shapeshifter Productions Ltd

chelle@kiechelle.com

I am currently on holiday in the Caribbean and will not be back until the 17th but feel compelled to respond to this.

The WFM is simply the voice of the local people. I run a free employability training group aimed at helping people in Waltham Forest who have been struggling to find employment especially with confidence and aspirations return to work. The WFM has been my number 1 source to promote and recruit for this project. It's the paper that brings the community together and breaks through barriers. If community cohesion is important we cannot change the way the WFM is being delivered. We need this paper in the frequency it is currently being delivered.

Kind regards

Kiechelle Degale

rachelbettelley@hotmail.com

Dear Waltham Forest News,

I am deeply saddened that the local WFN will become a quarterly publication, for news in the Borough it is useful quarterly but I have taken a lot from the listings in the publication and been informed about local events. Local events would really miss the exposure they get by being listed free in this publication.

I have reached many residents that have small children when I set up a Saturday class for French, Spanish and piano, I offer affordable classes and would have no budget for advertising in any other publication.

The parents and children that I have reached through putting a notice in WFN has been a good steady number of enquiries which show residents read this section and take note of groups classes and events locally.

Limiting the publication would be the death of WFN since other publications locally are also copying the format and come out more regularly.

Please Keep WFN Bi weekly it then is more consistent than the rivals.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Rachel Wedderburn

kay_russell_yoga@hotmail.com

I believe I have thanked you in the past for helping to support the yoga classes I give. Yes, I do earn from doing so, but I am more reasonably priced than other yoga classes in our area. I have a goodly number of those who couldn't normally afford to come, yet put in a just small donation (whatever they can afford) rather than pay in full. Yoga is for everyone, but my real interest, having suffered from Bi-Polarity myself many years ago, comes through discovering how powerful yoga is in stabilising people like myself. I take no medication, so am not a drain on the NHS, I don't constantly see my GP, as I did before I began yoga myself in 1978 - in Goodmayes Hospital where I'd been sectioned. I've never looked back.

This isn't just MY story; it's that of the numerous people who have come to the classes, and discovered that yoga lowers the extremes of Bi-Polarity, as well as helps with ALL manner of mental problems - un-numbered people find help as much with mental illness as with physical problems.

Stop the Waltham Forest News and you prevent the public from finding ways to improve their health, not just by me, but all forms of physical exercise advertised within.

Sorry if I've droned on a bit, but I feel passionate about the subject. Kay

diana@flipsidevision.com

Dear Waltham Forest News

Transition Leytonstone was founded in 2009 as a dynamic response on the local level to global climate change, resource depletion and economic meltdown. As publicity and events organiser for Transition Leytonstone, I have found the What's On section of WFN immensely useful in promoting our events and regular activities which are all focused on creating a resilient local community. Through the added publicity from WFN we have been able to broaden our inclusive reach even further, as we rely entirely on print media, social media, and word of mouth. We have also received and accepted invitations to contribute Opinion pieces for page 2, and have

received occasional coverage of our projects/events - with photographs. All of this has helped us to raise our profile in the local community, which is vital for a voluntary group with minimal funding, such as ourselves.

If WFN were to appear every 13 weeks, we would struggle to get the publicity we need for our Community Garden workshops, energy events and film screenings, as these are usually organised on a 4-6 week timeline. Additionally, our weekly fixture, the Leytonstone Community Produce stall, and our monthly fixture, Leytonstone Green Drinks, would go under the radar at a time when there is a visible upsurge of new homeowners in the area - people that we want to reach out to so that they can put down roots in our community.

Hope this helps. You may quote any or all of this in support of the continued fortnightly publication of WFN.

Regards

Diana

haleendharriers@live.co.uk

Dear Waltham Forest News,

I would like to contribute my views regarding the value of having Waltham Forest News published and circulated fortnightly- the current basis, rather than 4 times a year as indicated by the government.

I run a weekly walking group for mums who feel isolated with first child, women including ethnic minority women within 25-55 age group range. This group has enabled residents who don't know each other to engage with other residents from other communities.

The group also provides updated information to residents group members on health, fitness, education. This group is supported by Run England-the body responsible for encouraging local people to participate in local activities such as walking and running.

Waltham Forest News enables our group to reach out to residents of Waltham Forest, particular those in different areas of the borough. We don't have budgets/funds to run advertising campaigns to reach these residents, so our group would collapse with out Waltham Forest News support in its giving us the opportunity to place our group activities in the paper for free and also supporting us to reach out to this individuals.

Our group members have often quoted to us that the Waltham Forest News arrived at the right time with leisure opportunities such as ours.

This Summer we were highly successful in gaining lot of enquiries and residents joining our Summer programme due to Waltham Forest supporting us to reach out right across the borough than we could normally envisage via their Leisure listings split into different parts of the borough.

It's is a valuable community asset.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Rita Nicholas

mjwalk@globalnet.co.uk

We at Link4Growth are great supporters of this local Waltham Forest news publication, it being the perfect vehicle for us to get our important message out to those who need to receive it.

Link4Growth is a national 'not for profit' **locally based** Community and Business Networking organisation that is helping to re-build and regenerate local communities.

The ability to involve as many local residents and businesses as possible is vital to the growth and success of Link4Growth, and this growth is one of the building blocks that is helping to make the positive developments needed locally.

Any reduction in the ability to publicise this vital work is to be greatly regretted.

Jane, Fiona and Debra - Link4Growth Chingford

a.cole71@ntlworld.com

Dear Emily

I'm just writing to lend my support to your bid to maintain WF News as a fortnightly publication. I would completely agree that a publication that came out only four times a year would be a very different creature and would have a particularly damaging effect on community organisations.

I am chair of the Walthamstow WEA branch which each year runs two day-time classes on the theatre and two evening classes, usually on local history. We have between 12 and 20 local people at our classes, of all ages and ethnic groups. We also have some students with disabilities. As with much adult education, the classes have both an educational and social value.

One of the main ways that we advertise these classes is through the WF News and we often hear that new recruits first learnt about the class through reading the ads in your coming events pages. Clearly we would not be able to reach this same audience if WF 'News' only came out four times a year - and timing is key for these ads. Potentially these changes could have a really damaging effect on our classes - and at worst mean we weren't able to run a class at all since each class has to have at least 12 enrolments to be viable.

I wish you the best of luck in your campaign to keep WF News alive. Please keep me posted on developments.

All the best,

Andrew Cole

Chair

Walthamstow WEA Branch

bushwoodacu@aol.com

Waltham Forest News has provided my Clinic with an opportunity to reach the residents of Waltham Forest with an offer to undergo a free consultation into how Acupuncture and its associated therapies can help in a wide variety of health conditions. Acupuncture is recognized by NICE and the BMC as offering an effective complement in the treatment of conditions like pain, nausea, and musculoskeletal diseases. Our free consultations have proved popular with local residents and enable people with ill health conditions to consider low cost alternative treatments provided by qualified acupuncture practitioners. As a low cost clinic we try to keep our overhead costs down and Waltham Forest News has assisted us in achieving these aims. The reduction in the frequency of publication will have an adverse effect on our ability to reach local people with a viable alternative ill health solutions.

Anthony Bellis

Bushwood Acupuncture

kay@thesoulproject.com

Hi

I work part time at a local children's charity based in Wood Street E17. Please see the attached document for more information about the work we do here at the charity.

I really value the support I get from Waltham Forest News with helping to advertise our fundraising events and for giving out general information about the services/programmes we provide for the local community. In fact I will be contacting the publication to advertise an event directly after sending this email.

I regularly use the publication to see what is going on locally, and I also find out useful information that I might not have actually sought out.

I really feel it also serves members of our community who are not comfortable using other forms of social media (and that includes me!!!!). We should not exclude local people who choose not to Facebook, Tweet or whatever!!!

I think there will definitely be a detrimental effect to our charity and also the wider community if we are unable to reach out to those people who currently rely on it.

Kind regards

Kay Wright

t.nandi@tcv.org.uk

Dear WFN

Please find below our letter of support for maintaining the current format of the WFN publication. Please note this is just the letter of support from our local Waltham Forest office and is not intended for publication. Anything to be published must be cleared with our PR department.

Kind regards

Tom

a) The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) are an environmental volunteering charity offering a variety of volunteering programmes and opportunities for people to learn new skills, meet new people, improve their local green spaces as well as their own physical and mental health. TCV is a fully inclusive organisation that works with people from all backgrounds and also take on a large numbers of people referred by the PHT. The primary focus of the charity is to improve local green spaces and get

people involved with those green spaces, and there is now substantial evidence to support the link between health and conservation work/contact with green space.

b) WFN has helped TCV WF by listing community volunteering events run by the charity in the borough, helping us reach a wider audience and hopefully benefit more people and places.

c) Reducing the number of publications means a large number of events falling in between the publication dates would not be publicised by WFN, meaning some members of the community would not hear about them that otherwise would do so. This means fewer people might benefit from the opportunities offered by the charity and also any reduction on volunteer numbers could impact the success of these community events.

pat cutler patcutler@hotmail.com

I responded previously but it was a while ago now and sadly I can't remember exactly what I said, so sorry if this is a bit of repetition;

As a resident and reader, I gather most of my local information from WFN. I particularly consult the 'what's on' pages because there are many activities publicised there that are independent of organisations and would struggle for a platform otherwise. As a direct result of promotion in these lists, I have taken up tap dancing for the first time, with a local group and at the age of 65. The LA Adult Learning programme does not offer these. I also do Tai Chi as a result of an ad in WFN, and have participated in the 'Our Parks' programme, also as a result of seeing the ad in WFN. It was there too that I saw that Antiques Road Show was coming to WF and also the Royal Opera House screen productions in Walthamstow Town Centre, both of which I supported. The pieces about the regeneration of WF parks and the development and awards of William Morris Gallery have also prompted me to visit, and I read the planning applications.....for which I wouldn't remember to go online specifically.

I participate in a women's' jogging group which I originally read about in WFN and as a result of that, I have become a licensed UK Athletics 'Running Leader' and co-lead the group despite not being an athlete at all before! The group is highly diverse with many of WF's communities represented and it is a great example of social integration.

So all in all, I owe a lot to WFN and strongly believe that further reduction in its publication would be very detrimental to people like myself who find it highly accessible, well presented and of excellent quality.

Patricia Cutler

Hi Emily,

Thanks for your email, please see below response from GLL.

- a. The nature of your group, the work it does and the communities it supports, for example ethnic minorities, women, disabled people, specific age groups, LGBT or religious communities.

Our better leisure centres aims to provide opportunities for the whole of the Waltham Forest community to become more active. We deliver targeted programmes to cater for the make up of the community, for example: women only swimming and gym sessions, inclusive discounted membership package for people with disabilities and junior specific lessons and courses. We are always looking at how we can increase our provision to provide even more opportunities for our community and to strengthen our current programmes.

- b. How WFN has supported your organisation and the community

WFN has enabled us to be able to help the community understand what 'Better' is and how we invest our time to provide safe and inclusive programmes for all. It also helps us promote specific events and sessions e.g. women's only day and centre open days. The opportunity to promote within the WFN also helps us build new community partners and organisations. We work very closely with Waltham Forest Council, in particular the sports development team so that we can work on projects together to help raise the profile of sport and leisure in Waltham Forest with the aim to engage all of the community to become more active more often.

- c. The impact of reducing publication from every 2 weeks to every 13 weeks.

Our leisure centres programmes aim to meet the local demand of the community, and listening to customer feed back means that our programmes can often change slightly and we also deliver a number of different events and open days throughout the year therefore its important that we are regularly promoting any new sessions or programmes to the community.

I hope that helps.

Thanks.

Kind regards,

Jenni Phillips

Community Sports Officer, GLL Waltham Forest