

CIPR Pride Awards 2013

Category: Best External Publication

Entry: Surrey Matters, Surrey County Council

1. Brief and objectives

Surrey Matters is Surrey County Council's resident magazine delivered to just under 500,000 households across the county three times a year, with a potential readership of 1.1 million.

The magazine is produced to increase public understanding, awareness and satisfaction of council services. With tighter budgets and recent local government cuts, Surrey Matters also focuses on encouraging residents to have more influence, control and responsibility over council services.

Having previously carried out a redesign following resident feedback to give the magazine a more resident focus, our next aim was increase how informed residents feel and engagement with Surrey Matters, especially through its digital channels

Our objectives were therefore to:

- Increase the number of people who feel engaged with the council.
- Increase the number of people who feel informed about council services.

2. Strategy and tactics

We used real stories of Surrey people in every possible feature to promote council service and better inform and engage with residents.

To compliment this consumer-style editorial, the design used 'friendlier' typefaces, a soft and feminine colour palette and engaging pictures of Surrey residents to compliment the editorial.

The layout of the magazine was aimed to keep the reader's attention with a mix of news articles, event listings and features, which includes box outs and pull-out quotes to break up the design.

The digital presence of the magazine was also developed to offer further engagement opportunities with readers and regular stories and updates. This included a newly designed [website](#) which is updated weekly, a monthly [e-newsletter](#) and a range of social media channels, including [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#) and [Pinterest](#).

3. Demonstration of engagement of target readers and circulation figures

With a suite of online and offline channels, Surrey Matters has become the key engagement brand for the council to talk to its residents.

The magazine is distributed to 492,000 households across the county three times a year, with a potential readership of 1.1 million.

There is always a high level of engagement with thousands of website hits and calls to the contact centre in the weeks following the distribution of the magazine. For

example, following the distribution of the Spring 2013 edition the Go Surrey website, which provides information about the upcoming sporting events in the county, received double the number of visitors than usual.

4. Research, planning, measurement and evaluation

Feedback suggests that Surrey Matters is something that residents like to receive and enjoy reading.

The most recent readership survey, which was carried out in the Autumn 2012 edition, showed that 80% felt the magazine kept them well informed of council services. Of those, 37% said it kept them very well informed – 13% higher than the previous year.

Comments received from residents about recent editions include:

Peter Dench: “Thank you for a cracking issue this time. The section on the cycling routes and on 'Visit Camberley' were of much interest.”

Roger Manning: “I’m normally a fairly curmudgeonly type of old man, finding faults everywhere, but I honestly can’t think of any useful comment to help you improve your magazine. It’s perfect!”

Mrs Heffernan: “I would just like to say how much the content has improved recently, compared to those of previous years. It’s not only interesting, but informative too.”

Margaret Venmore: “I really enjoy reading the Surrey Matters magazine, which gives lots of local information and well presented articles.”

The social media channels provide a way of enabling residents to talk and engage with the brand on a daily basis. They have attracted more than 9,000 followers and through engagement and interaction, our brand and messages often reach over 200,000 people each month.

The Surrey Matters e-newsletter is another way for residents to get the latest information and articles about council services. It currently has over 2,500 subscribers, with an average open rate of up to 60% (30% more than the local government average, according to email marketing software provider Newsweaver) and a click through rate of around 35% per edition.

The newly launched website also offers readers a one-stop shop of Surrey Matters, with the latest articles, events and competitions, plus they can read the magazine online.

Statistics show that the online version of the magazine receives around 3,000 views per edition and the website receives over 2,000 views each month.

5. Budget and cost effectiveness

Each edition costs an average of £73,319 to print and distribute.

The advertising generates an average of £6,000 revenue per edition, helping to offset the cost of production. This means each copy of the magazine costs 15p.