

# North Somerset Life magazine cost taxpayers more than £800,000 in last six years

A freedom of information request revealed the council spent more than £1 million on a magazine

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By [Stephen Sumner](#) Local Democracy Reporter

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**Mike Bell, deputy leader of North Somerset Council, has defended the public money spent on a local magazine**

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A magazine put out by North Somerset Council cost taxpayers more than £800,000 over the last six years.

The authority has now halved the frequency of North Somerset Life so it will arrive through residents' doors three times a year.

A freedom of information request revealed the publication cost the council £1.06 million between April 1, 2014, and the year to date.

Over the same period the income was £226,407 - giving a net cost of £841,061.

Deputy council leader Mike Bell, who has responsibility for communication, said: "We are reducing the frequency of the magazine in line with our previous budget saving proposals.

"At the same time we are complying with the central government legislation which prohibits councils from publishing their resident newsletter more than four times a year.

"Some of the money saved will be used to offset the shortfall in budget in other service areas over the next four years, and some of it will be reinvested in digital communication so that we can continue to communicate regularly with the people who matter most – our residents."

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North Somerset Life was introduced in 2014 under the previous Conservative administration.

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Following the 2015 elections, then leader Cllr Nigel Ashton wrote: "We are going to continue North Somerset Life for as long as it is needed.

"It is not a newspaper – it is an easy way for residents to keep in touch with what is going on at their council and in their area."

The latest edition of the magazine includes appeals for more foster parents, news, public health warnings and events.

The most expensive year for the magazine was 2015/16, when the net cost to taxpayers was £279,125.

The following year the income was just £13,293, down from a high of £73,470 in 2014/15.

Speaking of the coming changes, Cllr Bell said: "We recognise that not everyone has access to computers or smartphones, and some people prefer to read updates in print, which is why for the time-being we will continue to print three editions a year.



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streaming council meetings so that residents can watch councillors debate and take decisions in real time.”

Changes to the frequency of the magazine will start this year. The next edition will be the winter issue published in early November.

The council will continue to make the magazine available as an audio version and in large print for blind and partially-sighted residents.



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