
Meeting: Business Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 22nd March 2010
Subject: Web Development Strategy
Report of: Assistant Director, Communications
Summary: To seek input and feedback to the draft strategy.

Contact Officer: Georgina Stanton, Assistant Director, Communications
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The development of a comprehensive web strategy is fundamental to the transformation of the Council's services. The significant cost savings that can be unlocked by moving services online will become essential for the delivery of the corporate strategy. In particular Transformation of Learning, Personalisation in Social Care, The Customer Services Strategy and The Community Engagement Strategy.

Financial:

It is estimated that savings of up to £2.5m over 5 years can be unlocked by using the online channel more effectively. These savings will be achieved by:

- Encouraging customers to change their choice of contact channel with the Council (e.g. from telephone/face-to-face visits to web), and reducing the need for them to do so repeatedly
- Integration of front and back office processes so that customers enquiries can be resolved at their first point of contact with us, through the lowest cost channel, rather than having to be passed on to various officers.
- Reduced marketing and recruitment costs
- More efficient work practices using web tools
- Reducing the cost to process payments (for example – reducing cheque payments in favour of electronic online payments)

Implementation of the strategy requires an investment of £550,000 over 2 years with recurring costs of £45,000 per annum.

Legal:

All web based activity conducted by the authority and proposed within this plan will be consistent with the statutory code of conduct for local government.

Risk Management:

Implementation of this strategy will lead to more transparent workflow and management information relating to customer transactions providing better information for management decisions and audit trails when required.

Social networking tools will be managed centrally reducing the potential risk to reputation management from the use of this new media.

The digital inclusion element of the strategy acknowledges the need to make access to online resources easier for those who are not current users of the internet.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

The strategy will support the need for smarter work practices as workforce reductions are made.

The introduction of tighter governance around web practices will clarify roles and responsibilities across the organisation for all web activity.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Making a broad range of services available online will enhance equality of access in terms of when and where customers access the Council services.

The digital inclusion aspect of the strategy will seek to give greater equality of access to people currently not using the internet.

Community Safety:

N/A

Sustainability:

The strategy will support the key messages of the Sustainability Strategy making it easy for customers to get information about and apply for waste services, submit, review and comment on planning applications, participate in consultations on major development projects and simply tell the Council about pot holes and environmental issues.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. **That the Business Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the draft strategy and give feedback on:**
 - (a) **The broad objectives, invest to save targets and approach**
 - (b) **The core strands of activity referred to as the 5 pillars of the strategy**

Background Information

- 1 In the advent of transition, work was done to rapidly develop a website for the new authority. In development terms, the site was brought together over a ten week period in early 2009. The resulting site was essentially a combination of the information held by legacy authorities, albeit that some consistent branding had been applied.

- 2 During 2009, a range of enhancements to the existing site were made, including the development of a search facility, inclusion of an A-Z and refinement of the home page. However, it was acknowledged in September 2009 that a more fundamental improvement programme for the web was required and a Web Development Team was initiated to explore the potential of a Web Development Strategy

Research and Engagement

- 3 Building on existing research data, consultation has been undertaken with a range of internal experts to understand their requirements and ideas for the future website.
- 4 The success of the project will be dependent on how the website is used by customers and a combination of approaches have been used to gain insight into what customers want, expect and need from the Council's strategy.
- 5 At the outset of the project a Web Task Force was established with members from the Business Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other committees. The Web Task Force influenced the customer and engagement element of the strategy that led to greater member involvement. This included individual member input and an open session to which all members were invited. At the final meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Web Task Force on 1st March 2010 the draft strategy was approved.

Strategic Approach

- 6 The strategic objectives are to:
- Unlock significant organisational wide savings.
 - Give customers a better service.
- Make community engagement easy and relevant.
- 7 It is proposed that the structure for the delivery of our objectives will be through five key areas of work referred to as the pillars of the strategy
- (a) **Getting the basics right** – in order to build a solid foundation for the strategy, the navigational structure, systems and governance need to be aligned with our objectives
 - (b) **Doing it better online** – exploiting the opportunity to transfer services online to make processes better, simpler and cheaper
 - (c) **Personalising** – tailoring services more to customer needs particularly based on postcode and life stage
 - (d) **Getting involved in online conversations** - exploiting social media such as Facebook and Twitter for effective, meaningful and low cost communications
 - (e) **Bridging the digital divide** – nationally 30% of the population do not have access to or use the internet. This strategy will make recommendations on how identified non-internet users in Central Bedfordshire may be reached effectively.

Conclusion and Next Steps

- 8 Following feedback and amendment from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee it is anticipated that the strategy will be presented to the Executive for consideration on 6th April 2010

Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Web Development Strategy

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Ipsos MORI research findings – Overview and Scrutiny Committee papers January 2010

The Mosaic customer data compiled as part of the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Total Place

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands