Central Bedfordshire Council

Draft Web Development Strategy

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The Web Development Strategy Executive Summary

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.

This web strategy outlines how a cohesive approach to the Council's online presence will save money, give customers a better service and community engagement, and support Councillors as leaders of place.

These 3 objectives will be achieved by:

1. Unlocking significant organisation wide cost savings
It is estimated that savings of up to £2.5m over a 5 year period 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)

2. Giving customers a better service
Moving services online will make self-service easy for those who are able to access and use the internet confidently. Identifying and understanding customers who do not use the internet will provide insight as to how to help customers who cannot self-serve.

3. Making community engagement easy and relevant
Making effective use of social media tools will make it easier for the Council to engage with customers. These tools allow Councils to have conversations with local people about matters of policy and service. In this way they can be used to facilitate greater democratic involvement.

Assessment of the need

The web strategy has assessed the Council's strategic needs through a combination of customer and organisational insight and best practice reviews. Customer data has been analysed and the team have met with internal experts across the organisation (including both officers and Members) to understand their current issues and plans, and to discuss opportunities to use the web strategy to deliver their objectives.

Key findings

The existing website was constructed very rapidly to ensure the availability of a comprehensive web service on 1st April 2009. This objective was achieved successfully. However, the current approach to the Council's online presence has limitations that prevent it from playing a fuller role in meeting the challenges and aspirations of the Council.

To date the Council's websites have been set up and managed individually and independently from each other.

The Council is responsible for a number of micro sites, such as the Bedfordshire Schools website, the Bedfordshire Libraries website and the main Council website.

Research conducted for the Web Development Project demonstrates that a more strategic approach to management of the Council's online presence will create opportunities to deliver core business objectives as outlined in the organisation plan. In particular, the new online presence will support the Transformation of Learning, Personalisation in Social Care, Customer Services and Community Engagement Strategies.

Key recommendations

There are 5 recommended areas of focus that are referred to as the pillars of the strategy in this document.

The 5 pillars of the strategy
1. **Getting the basics right** – creating the right platform
2. **Personalising** – making it easy to self serve
3. **Getting involved in the online conversation** – building stronger engagement relationships
4. **Doing it better online** – making processes better, simpler, cheaper
5. **Bridging the digital divide** – digital inclusion

Project scope and implementation

We recommend that the scope of this strategy encompasses all online activity where the Council is responsible for content provided to customers and partners. This includes the main Central Bedfordshire Council website, and all existing micro sites. We also recommend working with partners to maximize the potential of The Bedfordshire Libraries and Schools websites.

The strategy will govern the direction of all social media activity undertaken on behalf of the Council and identifies action that can be taken to bridge the existing digital divide.

As the scope of this strategy is far reaching we recommend a phased approach to implementation balancing longer term objectives against the need to realise quick wins early enough to maintain momentum. A prioritisation process has been established to inform the project implementation on this basis.

It is estimated that the full implementation of this strategy will be completed in 2 years.   As the plan delivers in incremental steps, it is anticipated that the initial benefits of implementation will be realised from year 2 onwards.

The Web Development Strategy Full Report

1. Introduction

This report draws together customer and organisational insight from research undertaken by the Web Development Project team. It describes how the web strategy can be used to make significant savings, whilst acting as a driver and delivery mechanism for the strategies in the organisation plan. It makes recommendations for the project implementation based on a prioritisation schedule.

2. Customer Insight Headlines

2.1 The **Mosaic** customer data compiled as part of the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Total Place pilot project indicates that in Central Bedfordshire the majority of residents fit a customer profile that willingly uses or could be encouraged to use the internet to get information and make use of services. There is, however, a significant minority clustered around Dunstable and Flitwick, in particular, who may not have the resources or the inclination to use the internet in their daily lives.

This strategy intends to lay out an approach that will make it easy for the majority of customers in the region to:
- self serve information and services from the Council
- be informed
- easily participate in Council business if they wish

whilst outlining an approach on inclusiveness for those who are not actively using the internet.

2.2 The **MORI residents survey (November 09)** told us that for those customers who do use the internet there is a willingness to use the Council website to help themselves. However, customers are most likely to visit the Council site only when they have a problem to solve for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

This strategy assumes that customers will only visit the site if they have a specific requirement and are unlikely to browse outside of that requirement unless they are intelligently sign posted to information and services that are timely and relevant to their personal situation.

For this reason the strategy will make recommendations on navigation, approaches to personalisation of data, use of social media as a sign posting tool and overall management of content.

2.3 Customer Services telephone call data indicates that the top reasons for customer calls outside of general enquiries are waste and recycling, Council tax and benefits, adult social care and housing. They account for 41% of the 750,000 calls received each year. Many of these enquiries are simple and are resolved at the first point of contact by call operators using existing legacy systems. The web strategy will make recommendations on how call volumes can be reduced as it is made easier for customers to self serve these same enquiries online.

2.4 Interviews with frontline staff revealed that there are a number of life stages that prompt the need for a customer to access a range of services due to a single event, for example when moving into the area, moving into retirement, being made redundant etc. Currently, staff identify the different services needed on behalf of the customer. The web strategy will make recommendations on how this expertise can be used to lead a customer through Council services appropriately online.

The web strategy and the customer services strategy are closely aligned and the website will play an important part in directing calls more efficiently to relevant call answering teams. It will also provide a support tool to help customer services teams answer calls more easily. The aim, however, is to encourage use of the web channel wherever possible and it is intended that the call answering teams will proactively sign post customers to use the web as a future access point.

2.5 Data from customer service centres shows that of the average 4,200 visits per month who choose to see us face to face, benefits claims, housing and Council tax are consistently the main reasons for visits and repeat visits. Several customers we spoke to in filmed interviews described how the benefits process required up to 4 to 5 visits before a claim could be accepted. This finding is corroborated by research for Total Place where it was found that it took an average of 9 interactions with services to process a benefits claim.

Bus passes and waste enquiries were less significant in volume but consistently show as a reason for a visit. Priory House differs from other customer service centres in that customers regularly view plans there.

The web strategy will make recommendations on how the website can be used to reduce the number of visits required and support the proposed self help approach to face to face customer service.

2.6 Website statistics show consistent visitor numbers of around 47,000 per month since April last year. The only notable exception to this was in January 2010 when visits increased to 80,000 due to people seeking information about school closures and bin collections.

The consistent top search topics for all months outside of January are jobs and careers at the Council and planning applications. Outside of these two popular subjects there is a good spread of visits across the site. The homepage is by far the most visited page on the site and generally it takes more than 3 clicks to get from this page to the information searched.

Visits to the site, in the main, come from Google followed in order of volume by Direct Gov, Bing, BBC 3 Counties and the Bedfordshire Schools website. The strategy will make recommendations on how these referrers and others can be managed proactively to bring customers to the website when it is relevant to their needs. There is no evidence that partners are making high volumes of referrals to content on the website.

The vast majority of visitors to the site use a computer; however 18,500 visits have been made using an Apple IPhone since April 09. This is a small proportion of all visits but should be noted as an emerging technology that the website should have some compatibility with.

At present much of the website's content is held in PDF format. In total there are 3,100 PDFs on the site. PDF based information is difficult to access through searches, can be slow to open and has been described by customers and staff as "clunky" to navigate. The web strategy will propose a new approach to the site navigation and a suite of tools that will make information currently stored in PDF easier to use.

2.7 Interviews with customers corroborate the findings from the customer data sources above. In particular customers told us that they would only use the Council site when they had a personal need and if they were confident that it would do the job effectively. Confident internet users were happy to be signposted back to the website to do something if it made sense to do it that way. They were also happy to receive information by email and sms although the general feeling was that a letter had more gravitas and would be taken more seriously as a reason to act, for example, to pay overdue Council tax or library fines.

Customer interviews were held at customer service centres and so some groups were over represented, in particular those on benefits. It was, however, notable that a high proportion of visitors, about 70% of the people

we spoke to, did not use the internet in their daily lives. The reasons seemed to be that the internet was either too expensive or they were not convinced of the benefits. The presumption is that older people do not use the internet. Of the 3 retired customers we spoke to, 2 were very confident online. Of the 3 young families we spoke to none had online access at home.

The national estimate for digital exclusion is 30% and 25% of those polled by the MORI residents' survey did not have internet access. The web strategy will make some recommendations on bridging this digital divide.

3. Organisational Insight

The project gathered organisational insight through meetings with internal experts and Members. The purpose was to get an understanding of the current environment, capture ideas for improvements and identify inter-dependencies.

Internal experts included:
- Representative Members from the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny, the back benches and the opposition party
- Waste and recycling
- Planning
- Schools Admissions
- Registrations
- Housing
- Benefits
- Democratic services
- Highways
- Customer services
- Consultations
- Adult social care
- Leisure centres
- Libraries
- Adult education
- Finance
- IT
- Mapping
- Business transformation
- HR
- Children, families and learning
- Emergency planning
- LSP partnerships

Organisational insights headlines

There was a high level of consistency of requirement across different services.

3.1 Navigation and content

Nearly every service identified the existing navigation on the website as a barrier to customers finding content and being able to self serve. Customer services, in particular, commented on the difficulty in finding information quickly to answer customer calls.

Frustrations were also raised with the limitations and complexity of the content management system Tridion and the speed with which amendments could be made to the site when developer expertise was required.

There are currently around 200 forms on the website available either in print off pdf documents or e-forms. Where e-forms exist workflow is managed via email into the service. There are no fully integrated front office to back office processes.

From April 09 to February 10 approximately £4m worth of payments were made online. The bulk of the value of these online payments came from Council tax, rent and non –domestic rates all of which are prominently sign posted for payment on the website. 900 individual payments were made totaling £118k for other services. There are many services that do not offer an online payment option, for example parking fines.

There is a widespread requirement to have more flexibility to reflect the nature of local services. In particular the services would like to make the site more interesting using a wider range of tools and media to express content.

3.2 Systems and processes

It became clear talking to services that there are a multitude of different IT systems in use across the organisation and in many instances extra modules to improve customer service are available in systems but not yet deployed.

In addition the organisation is in the process of changing, consolidating and procuring new systems that potentially have a cross over of capability with the requirements of the web strategy. The web strategy will make recommendations on how this existing capability can be used to maximum potential in conjunction with the website. There may also be opportunities to use the website as a bridge within these processes.

Many services make use of 3rd party managed systems to run their day to day business. In some cases the full functionality required for the website is active

and available within these systems. In these cases the web strategy will make recommendations on how to link into and brand these systems from the website.

In some instances processes between front and back offices are partially automated requiring some double entry and email exchanges. In others there is almost full automation between the point of entry via customer services and implementation by a contractor, whilst others remain largely paper based. The web strategy will make recommendations on how processes can be simplified and integrated using the website as an entry point.

Some local authorities are simplifying routes into their services through the use of independent, free 3rd party websites for example www.fixmystreet.com. The benefit of these sites is that customers are using them nationally; they are simple to integrate and free. It is likely that of the many complimentary websites that exist, a few will become the clear route of choice for some customers. The web strategy will recommend which sites offer the greatest potential to meeting Central Bedfordshire's requirements.

3.3 Social media
Council services identified that the web strategy could be used to most effect by providing a feedback loop to customers demonstrating that they have been listened to, to enable us better communicate with customers.

Social media is being used across government and the latest figures from the EGov register for local authorities suggest that 35% use Twitter, 18% use Facebook and 16% Youtube.

Facebook now has so many users that if it was a country it would be the fourth largest by population in the world. Users on average spend 36 minutes a day on the site. Social media is becoming a way of life for some customer groups and it is being used to draw communities together by interest rather than location, share learning and expertise for free, organise events, and encourage democratic participation in a new way.

In Central Bedfordshire there are 105,500 households. A sample of Facebook usage statistics, suggest that there are 14,220 active users within 10 miles of Bedford and 78,500 within 10 miles of Dunstable.

Services across the organisation recognise this potential and are keen to explore how this new media can be used to improve service, better engage and save money. Some services have already set up Facebook and Twitter pages.

There is, however, concern with the risks associated with the use of the unknown. This strategy will make recommendations on a cohesive approach to the use of social media and its governance.

Social media are being used by government and lobbyists to broaden democratic engagement. Blogs, Twitter, Webcasts and other tools are very effective means for organising groups around issues, holding meaningful conversations about policy and encouraging involvement.

In addition, independent groups such as My Society are establishing websites with the aim of increasing democratic transparency. They have established websites such as www.theyworkforyou.com and www.writetothem.com that provide extensive information about MPs in a simple, easily accessible format.

A recent report from The Hansard Society states that for those people who are already online and active this is how they prefer to engage with government. 49% of those already online prefer to use the internet to take part in democratic life, 70% agree that the internet makes it easier to participate and 40% say that they now participate more because of the internet. It also shows that age is no barrier to digital engagement.

This strategy makes recommendations on how social media can be used to support the Council's aspirations for community involvement.

4. Best Practice

Most services were able to reference an authority that could be used as a benchmark for delivery of their service online. No one Council was cited as being excellent in multiple areas.

The web strategy proposes that best practice from these authorities will be reflected in the design of new processes for the website.

4.1 Recommended benchmark websites

www.mycaremychoice.org.uk / (Stockport)	Adult Social Care
http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/atoz/mainSections/index.asp?catType=3&catID=10481&subcatID=10515	Democratic Services
www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/Council-and-democracy/consultations /	Consultation and Social Media Use

www.hertsdirect.org/actweb/education/admissions	Online Schools Admissions
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/community/bmd /	Registrations
www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport/fault_reporting.aspx http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/SCCWebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTF/Reporting+defects+and+potholes+on+the+road?opendocument	Highways and Travel
http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/	Life Events
www.eastriding.gov.uk/myarea/cats_myarea.asp	Customer Services /Location based services
www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/pages/index02.asp	Waste and Recycling
www.enfield.gov.uk/info/200067/working_for_the_Council www.barnet.gov.uk/jobs-careers	HR
www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/online_information/	Online Publications

5. National Drivers

Nationally there has been a focus on delivering public services through e-channels for some years and many paper based services have been very successfully automated online. The focus now is on web 2.0 and Digital Britain. Broadly, this is about using online channels to deliver public services in a more innovative way and creating an infrastructure that will provide next generation internet access.

In addition there is a growing recognition that digital exclusion is an issue that needs to be resolved as the economy becomes more digitally reliant. The web strategy will make recommendations on how the use of web 2.0 can aid innovation in the delivery of the Council's online services.

There are national drivers behind the core strategies on the organisation plan for example in Adult Social Care every Council must have a strategy in place to create universal information and advice by April 2010. The web strategy will play an important role in the delivery of that objective. As it will in the delivery of the Transformation of Learning, Personalisation in Social Care, Customer Services and Community Engagement Strategies.

6. Recommendations

5 pillars of the strategy

The 5 pillars of the strategy provide areas of focus that address the requirements identified through customer and organisational insight. They are not necessarily sequential and in the implementation plan they may be seen as complimentary work streams for an overall programme.

1. **Getting the basics right** – creating the right platform
2. **Personalising** – making it easy to self serve
3. **Getting involved in the online conversation** – building stronger engagement relationships
4. **Doing it better online** – making processes better, simpler, cheaper
5. **Bridging the digital divide** –digital inclusion

6.1. Getting the basics right

- **Navigation**
- **Systems**
- **Governance**
- **Design**

This area of focus essentially sets the right platform for the delivery of the web strategy. These are the high priority basics that need to be addressed first. More detail on these recommendations is outlined in the content plan and social networking plan.

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
1	**Restructure site navigation** • Produce a proposed model using Direct Gov, life events categories and location based content • Establish an internal experts user group to test structure for fit with Council services • Test structure with customer group • Implement	• The existing navigation requires too many clicks to retrieve information and access a service • Direct Gov is the most prominent government multiservice website with 11m visits per month	Simple navigation is key to the delivery of all of the strategy objectives	HIGH
2	**Produce a link management plan** for traffic coming in and out of the main website (NB cross over with social media plan)	• Manage navigational routes outside of the site where possible	Simple navigation is key to the delivery of all of the strategy objectives	MEDIUM
3	**Identify existing systems with relationships to the website** and agree with ICT and services the functional roles of the systems in relation to the website	• Defines the ICT role of the website • Sets platform for process integration front office to	Avoid duplication of capability within systems	HIGH

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
		back office		
4	**Define roles and responsibilities** for the web manager, content owners and web development manager using RACI The main principles are: • content owners are up skilled to manage their areas via a simple to use content management system • the web manager manages homepage content, identifies and prioritises new development, manages the social networking plan and is accountable for the overall quality of the site • the web development manager advises on best method of implementation of new developments and implements to service level agreements	• Clarifies responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure that the website is managed to quality and able to keep up with pace of change	Key to delivery of all objectives	HIGH
5	**Establish site governance** including standards, use of branding and the role of microsites and integrated third party delivery websites	• Clarifies operational management	Key to delivery of all objectives	HIGH
6	**Simplify the content management system** and build in greater flexibility around design and choice of tools. Train content managers in the use of the system	• The simpler the tool the more likely it is to be used correctly • More flexibility will improve presentation and ease of use on the site	Key to the delivery of all objectives	HIGH

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
		• Easier to manage multiple branding on the website		
7	**Enhance the design of the site** to make it more interesting and easier to find information whilst maintaining accessibility standards	• Supports self service	More likely to be used by customers	HIGH

6.2. Personalising

- **Location based information**
- **Life event based information**
- **Recommending content**
- **Login to personal data**

Four approaches to personalistaion of content were identified in the research. Information presented according to postcode, information presented relating to a particular life event, suggestion made in an Amazon style and secure login to modify personal information. The recommendation is to focus primarily on organising content by geographical location and life event. How these are structured should take into account a possible future requirement for suggested content and secure logins. More detail on persoanlisation is outlined in the content plan.

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
1	**Agree prioritised content sets based on location** as a search criteria. Suggestions include: • Local reports eg potholes • Local recycling centres • Your local Councillor(s) • Bin collection dates • Local sheltered housing • Local crisis management/ local news	• To organize information simply to make self service easy	• Facilitates move to use of online service • Easy way to keep customers informed • Makes democratic connection to Councillor(s) • Establishes relationships between content that may be useful for further refining of personalization in the	**HIGH**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
			future	
2	**Develop plan for use of map based information**	• Maps will be a key tool used for accessing information and services across the website	• Avoids duplication of effort and investment • Ensures consistency of approach	**HIGH**
3	**Agree prioritised content sets based on life events** as a search criteria. Suggestions include: • Residents – eg moving into the area • Parents • Young people • Looking for a job • Interested in democracy • Moving into retirement • Dealing with debt • Dealing with death (NB this content does not necessarily feature on homepage navigation)	• To organize information simply to make self service easy • Takes the customer to what is most important to them	• Facilitates move to use of online service • Easy way to keep customers informed • Makes democratic connection to Councillor(s) • Establishes relationships between content that may be useful for further refining of personalization in the future	MEDIUM
4	**Recommending content in the Amazon model** based on content browsed Future requirement to be assessed using data from	• Further development based on an assessment of	• Data to be used to inform development work	**LOW**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
	web usage statistics	potential value add		
5	**Secure personal login** to review and modify personal individual data held on Council back office systems. NB Potential for requirement to come from Transforming Peoples Lives and other Organisation Plan priorities Future requirement to be assessed using data from web usage statistics -	• Further based on an assessment of potential value add	• Data to be used to inform development work • Business requirements drive development	**LOW**

6.3. Getting involved in the online conversation

- **Beyond consultation**
- **Customer insight**
- **Co-production**
- **Recruitment and professional networking**
- **Smarter working**

Social media offer a range of online tools that can very effectively support the objectives of services through engagement with customers at a time, place and method that the customer has chosen to use. It is an important complimentary communications tool to be used in conjunction with established methods. Social media presents the possibility of great opportunity and also the potential for risk. The recommendation is that it is approached as a cohesive element of the overall web strategy. More detail on recommendations relating to the use of social media is outlined in the social media plan.

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
1	**It is recommended that a whole organisation view** is established on the use of social media and that interactions are managed in accordance with guidelines set out in the social media plan. The communications team will produce the plan, with support from a social media professional. Principally the recommended websites to use for social networking are Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn, and established online government professional hubs. Other social networking tools should also be used as and when they compliment these sites. In the first instance, these sites will be set up by the	• Acceptance that social media is here to stay and that opting out is not an option • There is a strong business and democratic case for using this media • A co-ordinated whole organization approach will be	• Tried and tested approach by numerous government agencies • Raises profile of well connected, customer focused organisation	**HIGH**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
	communications team, with the support of a social media professional, based on research to better understand the potential to reach different groups of interest.	most beneficial with least risk		
2	**It is recommended that social networking be used to support consultations** in reaching customers who have a preference for digital channels. This approach will be trialed through the emerging Sustainable Community Engagement Strategy.	• Communicating in a place and way that customers want • Trialing and learning based on a specific requirement	• Low cost • Potential to reach groups not usually involved in consultations • Potential for richer conversations than is possible through traditional routes	**HIGH**
3	**It is recommended that social media be used to support Members as leaders of place** through the use of Blogs, Webcasts and other tools	• Effective tools for community engagement	• Low cost • Potential to reach groups not usually engaged • Potential for richer conversations	**MEDIUM**
4	**It is recommended that social media is used to support in collaboration in the design of services** in particular in	• Effective tool for reaching and	• Low cost • Potential to reach	**MEDIUM**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
	support of the Transforming Peoples Lives Strategy	organising large group involvement	groups not usually involved in consultations • Potential for richer conversations than possible through traditional routes	
5	**It is recommended that social media is used to support recruitment** through the use of government professional hubs and sites such as LinkedIn	• Cost effective tool to establish The Employer Brand and connect with talented professionals	• Low cost • Raises profile with right potential candidate groups • Potential to save on advertising in hardcopy and online	**MEDIUM**
6	**It is recommended that social media is used to support smarter working within the organisation**. Websites with instant chat facilities such as Twitter and webcam capability such as Skype could be used to support remote working between sites and with partners. Facebook could be used to connect more simply with large groups of	• Supports smarter working as work force reduced	• Low cost • Simple to set up and use • Potential to save on travel and time	**MEDIUM**

Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
partners by interest		• Supports partnership working	

6.4. Doing it better online

- **Making it simpler using interactive tools**
- **Using existing systems & third party sites**
- **Integration**
- **Innovative thinking**

There is a lot of complexity in existing processes that needs to be understood and simplified in order to deliver services better online. The technology exists to facilitate innovative approaches without the need for huge investment. Where investment is made in online tools the benefit can be realised across many processes.

This area of focus that will result in significant changes to the way the Council does its business online and offers the greatest potential in terms of genearating savings.   The well used comparison in costs of face to face, telephone and online processes continue to illustrate the powerful business case for using the website for as many transactions as possible and migrating customers to use these opportunities wherever possible. Along with social media, transferring our processes online present great opportunities to be innovative about how a service is presented and managed online. The recommended approach is:

1. To simplify online processes using a range of online tools
2. Make best use of the ICT available
3. Integrate processes wherever possible

A prioritisation process has been established to plan and implement process changes based on ease of implementation, value added to the customer and organisation and potential to make cost savings.

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
1	**Use existing systems and processes established by customer services** to identify simple enquiries that can be resolved online. In particular waste and recycling	• Processes and systems already automated	• Building on existing experience	**HIGH**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
	processes currently managed through MVM are recommended.	• Likely to be simpler processes to implement • High volume of customer calls	• Will reduce avoidable contact allowing customer services to focus on managing more processes • Cost savings	
2	**Use web technology to integrate processes better from front to back office** and use the opportunity to remove duplication. In particular Council tax, schools admissions, benefits and housing.	• High volume transactions • Processes with high levels of duplication • Existing processes with significant use of paper	• Release resource • Cost savings	**MEDIUM**
3	**Use 3rd party websites where it will save on ICT investment and improve customer service**. Identify and test fit for purpose of sites such as fix my street, they work for you and find my nearest	• Free, simple to use and customers are using them • Meet needs that have been identified for potential ICT development	• Avoid ICT investment • Ease of implementation	**HIGH**
4	**Use the functionality already available in existing business systems** wherever possible to simplify the	• These are key business	• Ease of implementation	**HIGH**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
	management of processes online. In particular manage the branding of internal systems so that web traffic can be directed through these seamlessly.	management systems • The functionality exists already	• Cost savings	
5	**Use the content and functionality of other government websites** where possible. In particular the planning portal, direct gov, NHS sites and other partners	• Both content and functionality already exist • Customers are using these sites in high volume	• Ease of implementation • Avoid confusion and duplication • Avoid investment	**HIGH**
6	**Increase the number of payments made online**. In particular planning, parking fines, registrations, waste, adult social care, leisure centres, adult education and highways.	• Systems in place to take online payments	• Cost savings • Ease of implementation	**HIGH**
7	**Redefine use of PDFs on the site and make greater use of intelligent forms**. Review existing forms and identify opportunities to simplify and automate workflow into the service.	• Improve accessibility • Structure already in place	• Simplify self service • Cost savings	**HIGH**
8	**Develop a cohesive approach to the use of maps** to simplify the presentation of content both in the context of personalization and also individual content requirements. In particular for housing, waste, highways, planning,	• Very simple way to express complex information • Becoming a theme on many websites and also in use of mobile	• Simplify self service • Joins up services	**HIGH**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
		technology		
10	**Use bookings capability already available** in existing systems. In particular for registrations, adult social care, planning and leisure centres	• Reduce avoidable contact	• Cost savings	**MEDIUM**
11	**Develop mobile aps that can be downloaded onto 3G phones** to allow mobile access to Council services. This may be the next step on from the development of an approach to maps so that customers can make reports based on location whilst on the go.	• Providing service through channel of choice to a customer group • May allow more accurate and up to date information feeds from the public	• Information	**LOW**
12	**Develop a customer feedback ratings approach** that will allow customers to comment on and rate Council services. In particular adult social care, highways, registrations and adult education	• Improve customer feedback • Check out what doing well and not so well • Recommendations	• Information	**MEDIUM**
13	**Develop calendars to express key dates**. In particular term dates and count down to schools admissions	• Simplify content	• Reduced calls	**LOW**
14	**Develop special applications for specific requirements**. Consider a tool that will allow the current top calls being made to the call centres to drive content shown on the home page. Consider the	• Simplify content • Encourage users online for a previously paper	• Reduced calls • Front and back office integration	**MEDIUM**

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
	development of a comparison tool to encourage the whole online admissions process to take place online.	based process		
15	**Develop a feedback mechanism for all highways enquiries** made online using fixmystreet.com	• Free • Tried and tested at other authorities	• Simple established tool	**HIGH**
16	**Develop a new section of the site using best practice models to** express Member related democratic content	• Supports Members as leaders of place	• Simple access to comprehensive information about Members	**MEDIUM**

Approach

As part of the development of this web strategy a prioritisation process has begun which captures detail about investment, ease of implementation, fit with strategic direction, potential value to the customer and savings for the organisation. The detail of that process is outlined in the prioritisation spreadsheets that are currently being populated with services.

6.5. Bridging the Digital Divide
- **Mapping needs**
- **Planning ICT access**
- **Assisting ICT learning**
- **Libraries**

Whilst the web strategy can meet the needs of the majority who can serve themselves, there are also a significant minority of customers who will not be benefiting from the move of services online. Early discussions on how this need can be met suggest a close alignment with the Libraries, Customer Services and Transforming Learning Strategies.

	Recommendation	Rationale	Benefit	Priority
1	**Map customer groups with no internet access or usage** using the Mosaic Total Place customer insight and Broadband penetration data	• Relevant customer insight already available to provide informed starting point	• Ease of assessment of issue	**MEDIUM**
2	**Explore possibilities to offer greater ICT access** in places where it is not currently available to the public for example in schools	• Resources exist • Known to have helped access in other authorities	• Ease of implementation	**MEDIUM**
3	**Explore possibilities to use adult education courses to** assist learning in sheltered accommodation and libraries	• Joining up of Council services to help older people	• Ease of implementation	**MEDIUM**
4	**Make greater use of libraries to provide internet access**	• Known to be internet access point of choice for large	• Ease of implementation	**HIGH**

percentage of
customers
- Existing service

7. Invest to save - the financial case

The financial analysis of the web development is based on research with internal experts within the Council, reviews of other local authority case studies and Government advice and assessments of opportunities to make efficiencies.

The web strategy is critical to delivery of the transformation of the Council's services. The benefits of using the online channel are not limited to a single area, but are anticipated to be evident across the entire Council. Rather than seeking to ring fence savings to a corporate account, it is therefore proposed that savings be accounted for within service areas.

In order to unlock these savings most efficiently we recommend that all services are required to identify where the use of web capability will deliver savings within their service. To avoid double accounting the Efficiencies Board will capture these savings centrally.

7.1 Assumptions

Implementation of the strategy will be phased, based on prioritisation criteria that assess size of cost saving, ease of implementation, customer benefit and fit with strategic objectives.

It is assumed that it will take 6 to 12 months from the date of going live with any one element of the strategy to begin to realise the benefits. This is to take account of the time lag between and service being made available, customers becoming aware and use being made of it.

For this reason the invest to save business case begins to count savings from year 2 after implementation.

It is assumed that the skills and capacity to implement the ICT elements of the strategy are currently not available within the service and that investment will be needed to fulfill this requirement.

In order to maintain momentum and achieve benefits in both the short and long term it is envisaged that the strategy will be developed alongside the existing website. Each new element will become available incrementally rather than through a launch of all new elements on a given date.

7.2 Identified Savings

The project team has estimated savings of up to £2.5m over 5 years through the implementation of the web strategy.

Saving basis	Estimated Value	Timescale to implement relevant elements of the strategy	Expected year of realisation of benefits
1. Channel switch from face to face and phone to web	£1.4m	1 year	Years 2-5
2. Process re-engineering and reduction in duplication of effort through automation of manual processes	£1m	2 years	Years 3-5
3. Reduced spend on marketing, recruitment, consultations and adhoc micro sites	£50,000	1 year	Years 2-5
4. Smarter working resulting in savings in travel expenses	£50,000	2 years	Years 3-5
5.Income from selling elements of the strategy to other authorities	Unknown		Years 3-5
Total	**£2.5m**		

These estimates are based on the following assessment

1. **Channel switch**
   a. Baseline figures that are widely used for interactions by channel are telephone costs per transaction = £4.00, face to face costs per transaction = £7.80 and web costs per transaction = 17p
   b. An assessment of 6 Central Bedfordshire Council processes netted a saving of £632,000 over a 5 year period. This was based on the following estimated switch rate from another channel: 0% in year 1, 15% in year 2, 30% in year 3, 45% in year 4 and 60% in year 5.
   c. The £1.4m saving target is based on the moving the top 20% of high volume processes online. For example, all Waste enquiries, some Revenues and Benefits processes, Registration and Adult Social Care.

2. **Process re-engineering and front and back office integration**
   a. Research by EzGov Europe estimates that for every £1 of saving that is made in the front office a further £8 saving can be made

in the back office when the two are fully integrated.   This level of saving is most likely to be generated from the largely paper based services in revenues and benefits, education, transport and social care where automation of processes is least developed. For example, benefits claims, blue badge applications, and school admissions applications.

b. The Treasury Operational Efficiency Programme estimates that 20%- 30% can be saved through business process engineering of the public sector back office when benchmarked against the private sector. A key element in that re-engineering will be the cost effective use of web technology.

3. **Reduced marketing, recruitment and consultations costs**

a. HR have estimated that use of a range of online tools will reduce the HR marketing spend by 25%

b. The Publications Review estimates that £10,000 can be saved by making documentation available digitally rather than in hardcopy.

c. There are approximately 30 Council micro sites in existence that attract maintenance charges of an estimated £10,000 per year. Further spending on new micro sites will also be avoided at an estimate of £3,000 per site.

7.3 Investment

To implement the web strategy the following investments are required:

Capital Costs

Strategy Pillar	Brief Description	Estimated Cost
Getting the basics right	Re-development and design of web platform	£30,000
Doing it better online	Development and design of web tools to include maps, calendars, multimedia, specific applications, ratings and bookings	£100,000
Doing it better online	Integration with back office for key processes	£100,000
Doing it better online	Purchase of Civica module to support online processing of benefits payments	£75,000
Personalising	Association of content based on location and life stage	£30,000
Bridging the digital divide	Making ICT available to non-internet users	Further research required
Project management of implementation	Over 2 years	£100,000
Marketing	Telling customers about online services split 60/40 over 2 years	£80,000
Total Investment		£515,000

*All costs calculated over 2 year implementation period

7.4 Recurring costs per annum

Cost	Brief description	Value
System licences	Licences for Tridion or equivalent CMS, and Civica Benefits Module	£30,000
Maintenance	Updates and amendments to the site that require a developer	£15,000
Hosting	Hosted by the Council	£0.00
Total		£45,000

7.5 Summary

Investment £515,000 over 2 years

Saving £2.5m over 5 years

Recurring costs £45,000 per annum

8. The Project Management Case

On approval of this strategy it is estimated that this project will take 2 years to implement in its entirety.

A system of prioritisation has been established and work is underway to identify the project priorities against agreed criteria. The team will have project plans in place and be ready to begin work on implementation within 4 weeks of approval of the strategy, excluding any procurement process.

The project will be structured around the 5 pillars of the strategy and work will be undertaken on each area of focus simultaneously. Each pillar will require internal resource and skills both for the project team and also as extended work teams within the relevant service. These will change over the life of the project dependent on the recommendation that is being implemented.

The project will plan for an incremental implementation that will see elements of the strategy going live as and when they are ready. A sign off process will be established to ensure that each element is thoroughly tested and approved before being published to the public.

A project board will be established to oversee progress.

9. Measures of Success

The project itself will be monitored and measured against agreed milestones using standard project management tools.

The strategy recommendations will be measured using a balanced scorecard approach based on benefits to the **Customer**, **Financial Savings**, **Community Engagement** and **support of Staff in their jobs**.