Meeting:	**Executive**
Date:	**6 April 2010**
Subject:	**Web Development Strategy**
Report of:	**Cllr Richard Stay, Deputy Leader of the Council**
Summary:	The report proposes the implementation of a corporate web strategy as fundamental to the transformation of Council services.

Advising Officer:	Richard Carr, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Georgina Stanton, Assistant Director Communications
Public/Exempt:	Public
Wards Affected:	All
Function of:	Executive
Key Decision	Yes
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate)	N/A

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 and in particular the Transformation of Learning, Personalisation in Social Care, Customer Services and Community Engagement Strategies.
The delivery of the web strategy will also enable the Council to achieve core performance indicators such as NI14 relating to avoidable contact.

Financial:

This strategy proposes an investment of £515,000 over 2 years to yield savings of up to £2.5m over 5 years. The Business Transformation team are aware of the funding requirement and will be considering this bid from the Invest to Save budget at the Efficiencies Board in April.

The savings will be achieved by using the online channel more effectively by:

- Encouraging customers to change their choice of contact channel with the Council (e.g. from telephone/face-to-face visits to web transactions), 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)

It is proposed that recurring costs of £45,000 per annum for licences be covered by a combination of current existing funding from the ICT budget for the web, and from service budgets where licences are purchased for that specific service.

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 communications.

Risk Management:

Implementation of this strategy will lead to enhanced management information relating to customer transactions to support future decision making.
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 to enhance productivity.
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.
It is proposed that the website is designed to take into account the accessibility needs of people with different types of disability and or specific language needs.
The strategy recognises that the web channel is also an important tool to support staff dealing with customer enquiries either face to face of over the phone.

Community Safety:

N/A

Sustainability:
The strategy will support the Council's approach to Sustainability, 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 environmental issues.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:
• At the outset of the project a Member Task Force was established by the Business Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Task Force influenced the customer and engagement elements 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. It is to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd March 2010.

• Full details to be contained in an Appendix which will be provided between the meeting on 22nd March and the Executive meeting on 6th April. |

| RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Executive approves:

(a)   **The web strategy objectives and approach.**

(b)   **The invest to save proposal subject to approval by the Efficiencies Board.**

(c) **The core strands of activity referred to as the 5 pillars of the strategy as set out in paragraph. 5 of the report.**	
Reason for Recommendation(s):	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.

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.   Over the past year, a range of enhancements to the existing site have been 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 cross council project 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 Member Task Force was established which has 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.

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
Minutes from Web Task Force Overview and Scrutiny Meetings
Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands