

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**POLICY AND FINANCE CABINET MEMBER**

**WEB CHAT PILOT**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

1.1 To seek approval to undertake a web chat pilot to provide assistance to customers using [www.northlincs.gov.uk](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk)

1.2 The key points in this report are:

- A three month “in-hours” web chat pilot for the Waste Management pages on [www.northlincs.gov.uk](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk) is proposed
- The Customer Contact Centre will resource the web chats and manage them within their existing queue management system
- Regular reviews will be scheduled during the pilot period

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1. The implementation of a web chat pilot was identified in our 2014-15 and 2015-16 Digital Development Plans.
- 2.2. The aim of the project is to provide on-line assistance to customers when using the [www.northlincs.gov.uk](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk) website to reduce abandoned visits. The web chat facility will help direct customers to the correct webpage in order to allow them to self serve and complete their online journey.
- 2.3. Web chat is being used successfully by the private sector and a number of leading councils.
- 2.4. An initial three month pilot, subject to cabinet member approval, is planned to start 3 August 2015 focusing on the Waste management web-pages. Customers visiting Waste related pages on [www.northlincs.gov.uk](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk) will be offered an option to chat “on-line” to an operator during working hours.
- 2.5. Regular meetings will be held during the pilot to understand our customers’ needs, their issues generally and take up volumes for the web chat service.
- 2.6. Where possible web site content will be tweaked to address repeat issues or concerns.
- 2.7. The overall success will be assessed at the end of the pilot and a recommendation made as to whether to continue with an extended or council-wide facility.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 Two options are presented for consideration:

Option 1 – Approve the pilot

Option 2 – Do Nothing

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1 Option 1 is recommended as follows:

Advantages

- Recognised “digital assist” measure to help drive channel shift/cost reduction
- Small scale pilot
- Removal of some unnecessary contact by keeping customers on the cheapest channel that may have previously abandoned their visit
- Improved understanding of our customers and how they use our website
- Improved ways of providing council services eg. proactively helping them to self serve (assisted digital)

Disadvantages

- Some minor resource implications to undertake/monitor

### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 The work will be delivered by the Digital Services team in consultation with Customer Services. No additional costs have been identified.

### **6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

6.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken that indicates no adverse impacts arising from this report.

### **7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

7.1 Relevant services have been consulted including Customer Services who are agreeable to the pilot. No conflicts of interest or concerns have been identified.

### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Policy and Finance Cabinet Member approves the three-month pilot study.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report**

None