

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

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 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 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 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