

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES CABINET MEMBER

ENHANCING THE WEB CHANNEL

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To approve a programme of improvements to the council's website including the proposed decommissioning of Intralinc.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
- A programme of work is required to provide a customer focused / transactional web channel that meets customer needs, promotes channel shift and supports national agendas
 - The rapidly increasing number of web users with smart phones and other mobile devices now expect a bespoke mobile web experience
 - Duplication of content between the internal intranet and the website will cease as part of a proposal to decommission Intralinc

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The council's web presence has grown organically since 2001. The website now has in excess of 9,000 live pages which are managed by some 60+ service area based web authors. It attracts c. 1.5m hits a year.
- 2.2 Despite a range of recent improvements including the provision of a new technical platform and self-service portal, the council's website is falling behind both in terms of meeting customer expectations as well as the rate of development seen elsewhere in the sector. Specific issues include:
- website content - information is difficult to find, not written in plain English or with the customer journey in mind and is not always maintained
 - a large proportion of customer needs are met by a small number of recurring top tasks for each service whilst a significant amount of content is rarely accessed.
 - website search - searches from search engines (eg. Google) produce very good access to the our pages but the website's internal search is less reliable
 - mobile devices - the website displays and functions on mobile devices but it is not optimised
 - "Apps" – although we receive service requests from a number of third party "apps" we do not promote this facility

- exposing back office information to the web – back office information that is exposed to the web is not always written in plain English and presented without technical language
- 2.3 Smart phone penetration reached over 50% of the UK population for the first time during December 2012 with 76% of devices used to access the internet. Locally we have seen a 50% increase in mobile visits between January 2012 and November 2012 and could soon have a 50:50 split between mobile and traditional visitors. As a result of this development it is noted that:
- our website is not designed for mobile access and although it is possible to use the website on a mobile device it isn't as customer friendly as it could be
 - it is also likely that the needs of our mobile customers are different (eg. specific service enquiries such as where are the public toilets in Brigg, what time is my next bus etc.)
- 2.4 It is possible to develop a separate mobile experience based on top tasks or to apply a responsive design that displays it in the most appropriate manner based on the customer's device. Prototypes for both are in development by Digital Services.
- 2.5 A number of web related issues linked to the above have been identified by an internal stakeholder group including Communications, Customer Services, WorkSmart, Information Governance and Customer Insight specialists.
- 2.6 The same issues have also been identified in the SOCITM *Better Connected* 2013 Survey results. This is an external review of all 473 local authority websites with each website been award a rating of up to four stars. North Lincolnshire Council has been awarded a two star rating for 2013 (based on a summer 2012 assessment). A four star rating was awarded to 38 councils included East Riding of Yorkshire who use the same web technical platform as ours.
- 2.7 The government's "Digital By Default" agenda strives to deliver 80% of all customer interactions online.
- 2.8 Our vision is to deliver digital services that are so effective that our customers who access them will use them in preference to traditional and more expensive channels (ie. face to face, telephone and post). Essentially our vision is one where the web becomes the primary customer contact channel.
- 2.9 A move to a transactional approach to dealing with the council online supports the "One Council Putting Our Customers First" agenda and also contributes to the council priorities for improved customer services and value for money.
- 2.10 A paper was tabled by the Head of Information Governance at the 7 May 2013 meeting of the Customer Services Development Board proposing the development of a formal Channel Shift programme. In order to achieve any significant degree of channel shift to the web it is necessary to move to a transactional approach to content that provides easy access to the information our customers need to assist in each of their journeys.

- 2.11 At present there is a degree of duplication between the council website and its intranet (Intralinc) with some information being stored on both. It is now timely to decommission Intralinc whilst ensuring that this duplicated information is accurately stored on the website and that a replacement “electronic bookshelf” is implemented for other key Intralinc content such as council policies and procedures.
- 2.12 Appendix A (attached) identifies the necessary work streams, key tasks and timescales for the next six months to deliver this vision and assist in delivering the council’s Channel Shift ambitions and associated savings, improved customer service and improving the council’s rating in future SOCITM Better Connected surveys.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1. Option 1 – Approve the programme of improvements to the website detailed in Appendix A

3.1.1 Each work stream will be achieved by a number of defined deliverables with timescales, owners and a logical order of delivery.

3.1.2 We will continuously monitor the delivery of the overall work programme through regular stakeholder meetings. The Digital Services Manager is directly responsible for the monitoring and implementation of the work plan supported by other key council stakeholders. A structured Highlight Report will be tabled at each IT Strategy Board to provide progress updates and to address significant issues. The Customer Services Development Board will also be appraised of progress on a regular basis.

- 3.2 Option 2 – Amend or reject this programme of improvements to the website

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 - Approving the programme of improvements to the website is the preferred option and allows action to be taken with immediate effect

- 4.2 Option 2- Deferring approval of the programme of improvements to the website would lead to a delay pending the establishment of a new programme of improvements which would prevent the necessary work from being delivered in time for the next external survey of the website as part of the SOCITM Better Connected 2014. Additionally without this programme of work the council may be unable to deliver its Channel Shift ambitions and associated savings.

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

- 5.1 There is a need for all service area web authors to be retrained and urgently review their content against a new governance matrix, weeding out unnecessary pages and ensuring that any retained information is written for our customers.

- 5.2 There is a need for additional resource within Digital Services until 30 November 2013 support the delivery of these council-wide improvements to the web site and in particular to support the web authors in transforming their content.

5.3 There are a number of existing vacancies within IT Services that would fund this resource via the vacancy management process.

5.4 We will take opportunities as they arise to engage MASS as the council's Strategic IT Partner for advice or on demand access to resource.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTERATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

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

6.2 Decisions and actions taken in the delivery of the priorities outlined in this programme of improvements to the website will be subject to further integrated impact assessments as appropriate.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

7.1 An outline action plan has been discussed with stakeholders in Communications, Customer Services, WorkSmart, Information Governance and Customer insight who broadly supported the proposals.

7.2 The plan was referenced at the 7 May 2013 Customer Services Development Board who were supportive and requested sight of regular highlight reports at their meetings.

7.3 The plan was formally tabled at the 8 May 2013 IT Strategy Board where there was support for the plan, timescales and resourcing.

7.4 CMT has agreed support for the proposal.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the programme of improvements to the website is approved including the proposed decommissioning of Intralinc.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Project documentation and minutes from the "Enhancing the Web Channel" stakeholder group
- The SOCITM 2013 Better Connected Report of findings for North Lincolnshire Council
- The summary issues and action plan document in response to the SOCITM Better Connected 2013 Survey

Enhancing the council's website

Proposed six month programme of work

Our vision is to deliver digital services that are so effective that our customers who access them will use them in preference to traditional channels (ie. face to face, telephone & post)

The following six month action plan is necessary to deliver this vision, address the identified issues, identify stakeholders and to improve the council's rating in future external surveys. This programme of work will also assist the council to deliver its ambitions and savings for improved customer services and channel shift:

"Restructure of Website Content"

There is a need to radically restructure content to deliver a customer focused / transactional approach to dealing with the council online. This will allow us to improve customer services, reduce back office operational costs, promote channel shift and to contribute to national agenda (eg. Digital By Default)

ID	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Impact of failure
1	A focus group comprised of elected members, customer facing staff and other interested staff will be held to identify what is used, what works well and to identify opportunities to improve existing services or to deliver additional high volume services online	Customer Insight, Communications	Early June 2013	-Feedback on existing services will not be collected -Opportunities to improve online services or to offer additional services will not be identified
2	A new governance matrix needs to be developed and agreed to set the rules for content on the web: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We are able to identify the highest volume activities for each service (top tasks) using our existing reporting tools ➤ We are able to identify our legal obligations using the Local Government Publication Scheme ➤ The Focus Group task (1) will also inform this process of any opportunities to provide additional high volume services 	Digital Services, Information Governance, Customer Insight, Communications	Mid June 2013	-Without the agreement of these new governing principles it will not be possible to move to a transactional website or to deliver the vision and other benefits of this work programme
3	All web authors will be retrained in the new governance principles and the council style guide / plain English	Digital Service	End June 2013	-Without trained authors it will not be possible to restructure web content within six months in readiness for the next external review as part of the SOCITM 2014 Better Connected survey
4	All web content will be reviewed against the new governing principles and the style guide to ensure that any unnecessary content is "weeded out" and that retained information is appropriate for our customers needs / journey. Key words will be added to all retained information to ensure that multiple phrases can be used to produce the expected search results (eg. bin, waste collection, wheelie bin, dust bin, wheeled bin). Additional short term resource within Digital Services will support all council web authors during this task.	All service area web authors Digital Services	End October 2013	-Without this work it will not be possible to deliver the vision or benefits of this work programme -Without this work the council will not be able to deliver its ambitions for improved customer service and channel shift -Without this work the council will be unable to improve its rating in future external surveys
5	Large volumes of similar content will be identified (eg. news, cabinet papers) and consideration given to whether this may be better stored on a separate microsites to refocus the main website on transaction content	All service area web authors Digital Services	End October 2013	-Without this there will still be large volumes of unaffected web content as an example cabinet papers account for around 50% of the current 9,000 live pages

6	Consideration will be given to changing the look and feel of the website where necessary based on existing reporting information detailing where customers click key pages and the requirements for mobile web	Digital Services Communications	End October 2013	-Without this work some opportunities to meet customer needs, deliver transactional focused content and deliver content to mobile devices will be lost
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“Self Service (Quick Click)”

Digital Services have developed a suite of e-forms over the last five years with around 100 forms now been in live operation. In January 2013 a Self Service Portal (quick click) was launched to replace the top 50 e-forms by volume of use. The Self Service Portal (quick click) also provides a customer account for service requests and status updates allowing a register once approach and historic customer view of all their service requests. Since the launch of the Self Service Portal (quick click) in January 2013, 3,694 users have registered and between them they have made 4,908 requests for council services

ID	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Impact of failure
7	The Phase II development will provide additional service request types the Self Service Portal (quick click) for Waste Management jobs. It will also provide improved mapping functionality.	Digital Services Waste Management	End June 2013	-Without this work it will not be possible to move to Phase III of the work. This impact will be that the required outcomes will not be delivered within the six month period of this programme
8	The Phase III development will provide additional service request types the Self Service Portal (quick click) for Neighbourhood Services jobs.	Digital Services Neighbourhood Services	End October 2013	-Without this work it will not be possible to deliver the required outcomes within the six month period of this programme

“Bespoke Experience For Customers With Mobile Devices”

Smart Phone penetration reached over 50% of the UK population for the first time during December 2012 and 76% of these devices are used to access the internet. Locally we have seen a 50% increase in mobile visits between January 2012 and November 2012 and we could soon have a 50:50 split between mobile and traditional visits to the website. Our current website isn't designed for mobile use and although it is possible to use the website on mobile devices it isn't optimised for use on smaller displays. It is likely that the needs of our mobile customers are different (eg. where are the public toilets in Brigg, what time is Central Library open until, when is the next 450 bus etc.). The Website Content Management System (CMS) for mobile devices but there is a reliance on the restructuring of content task (4) to ensure that the information is accurate and supports the customers needs. There are two options for delivering this and prototypes for both are being developed and have been shown at recent meetings of the Customer Services Development Board and IT Strategy Board.

ID	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Impact of failure
9	Develop a prototype for a separate mobile website based on a “top tasks” approach with a link to the full website	Digital Services	End June 2013	-A prototype is necessary to inform the future direction
10	Develop a prototype for responsive web design that would able all retained web content to be presented correctly on any device. This would be achieved by the development of a reduced number of new templates for web authors to manage their content	Digital Services	End June 2013	-A prototype is necessary to inform the future direction
11	Agree future approach	IT Strategy Board CMT Digital Services Communications	Mid July 2013	-If this isn't in place then there is a negative impact on the content task (4) meaning the overall vision/benefits of the programme cannot be delivered to time
12	Development of templates and / or mobile website	Digital Services	End July	-If this isn't in place then there is a negative impact on the content task (4) that may mean that the overall vision/benefits of the programme cannot be delivered to time

“Smartphone Apps”

A growing number of “Apps” existing with the Apple & Android marketplaces that allow customers to request council services. To date only a handful of jobs have been generated from any of these. These jobs require manual back office action and integration with existing systems is costly for each system. We will continue to monitor the service requests and should a market leader emerge with a significant volume of service requests we will look to integrate the “App” with the Self Service Portal (quick click). In the interim we will publish a “Third Party Apps” statement detailing this approach on our website

ID	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Impact of failure
13	A “Third Party Apps” statement will be added to the council website	Digital Services	End August 2013	-No impact (however it would be good practice to make our intentions for smartphone “apps” clear)

“Duplication of Content / Duplication of Effort”

At present some information that is stored on the website is also duplicated on the council intranet (Intralinc). Intralinc is primarily used to access eforms, access the telephone directory and access to the discussion database for buying & selling of goods etc. There are plans in place to replace the HR eforms and the telephone directory and the discussion database isn’t core council business. As such it is now timely to decommission Intralinc.

ID	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Impact of failure
14	Ensure that duplicated content is removed from Intralinc and that the information on the web is accurate and relevant for customer needs	Service Area Intralinc Authors Service Area Web Authors Digital Services	End October 2013	-Without this task there is a risk that some information could be incorrectly retained, not accurate or not customer focused
15	Develop a replacement “electronic bookshelf” for the remaining Intralinc content eg. policies, procedures etc.	Digital Services	End October 2013	-Until this work is completed it will not be possible to decommission Intralinc
16	Decommission Intralinc	Digital Services Service Area Intralinc Authors	End October 2013	-The existing corporate contract for Lotus Notes that underpins Intralinc is due for replacement 31 October 2013. However the current expectation is for that contract to be extended

“Engagement with SOCITM”

SOCITM are the professional body for local government IT and they have been instrumental at a national level in the Governments Digital Agenda and enabling channel shift. We need to engage with them to ensure that we understand their aims and they understand our vision and plans.

ID	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Impact of failure
17	SOCITM’s Web Assistance Service will be engaged to share our plans with the intention of obtaining their endorsement and/or suggested improvements	Digital Services	End June 2013	-Without understanding their expectations it is difficult to plan a suite of improvements that will ensure an improved rating for future surveys
18	SOCITM’s “Learning From Better Connect 2013” event will be attended to understand their expectations for improvements and the format next years survey	Digital Services	15 th May 2013	-Without understanding their expectations it is difficult to plan a suite of improvements that will ensure an improved rating for future surveys
19	SOCITM’s “Building The Perfect Council Website” event will be attended to understand their expectations for council websites	Digital Services	11 th July 2013	-Without understanding their expectations it is difficult to plan a suite of improvements that will ensure an improved rating for future surveys

All identified work will need to be completed by 30 November 2013 in readiness for the next external review as part of the 2014 SOCITM Better Connected Survey. It should be noted that whilst Digital Services are happy to own this identified programme of improvements to the website it will be necessary for all services to contribute resource to ensure that all outcomes are delivered to the required time and quality.