

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

DIGITAL FIRST UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To update elected members on progress in the Digital First project and key next steps.

Information and Advice

2. This report is the latest regular update to Members on this project which sits within the Customer Access and Digital Development Programme in the Redefining Your Council portfolio.
3. An update is provided on the work streams in the project along with other key developments in the digital arena:
 - The new website www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk which was made live on 22 September
 - Social media progress
 - Discovery work around the new intranet eco-system
 - Other digital developments, including a new schools portal and work on microsites
4. Regular communications around Digital First have continued to be issued though a number of different channels. There are 710 subscribers to the Council's Digital First emailme bulletin. In addition, Member Digital Champion Cllr Darren Langton made a blog post in July on the Digital First Notts blog <https://digitalfirstnotts.wordpress.com> which is being used to keep residents, members, employees and stakeholders informed.

New website launch and customer journeys

5. The Council's new, responsive design website www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk which has been built around the needs of users went live on Tuesday, 22 September 2015. The website was delivered to schedule and within budget. This was developed entirely by a specialist in-house digital team which was recruited to enable the site to be iterated and improved regularly in the best value-for-money way possible.
6. The new website provides a platform for more services to be delivered online which will act as an enabler for savings.
7. The key improvements to the site are as follows:

- **Responsive design** – visitors using mobile phones or tablets are now able to easily view and carry out transactions on the website. Mobile visitors currently account for more than 50% of our 200,000 visitors a month and this figure is growing rapidly
 - It's **much easier** for people to find what they are looking for – due to improved content, a cleaner look, simpler navigation and a reduced number of pages. The old site had around 28,000 pages, many of which were never visited. The new site has less than 4000 pages and a large percentage of the content has been re-written in plain English
 - **Highly functional** – faster page downloading mean that visitors can find the information or service that they are looking for quicker
8. For the last four months, the site has been available to the public in Beta (test) format which has allowed the digital team to collect considerable feedback from users which has enabled improvements to be made to the site. Examples of public feedback resulting in changes include:
- requests to change “Trending Tasks” to “Top Tasks”
 - adding page tabs to the top of pages that have a lot of content to avoid the user scrolling down a long page
 - Changing action buttons name the actual task for example “Start to Adopt” instead of “Getting Started”.
9. Before the switch from the old site to the new one, work was done to make sure that as many of the old links that users would have saved would be redirected to the relevant page in the new site. This mapping exercise prevents the “404 error pages” that are often prevalent after launch as old links are broken.
10. The new site provides a platform to build the top 20 customer journeys that will create the potential for as many transactions to be shifted online as possible. This will help deliver savings for the authority. By moving more people online, it creates the potential to lower the average transaction cost with face-to-face costing £9.14, telephone £4.79 and online just £0.09p.

Social Media progress

11. The Council's social media policy, which is predominantly about use of social media channels by the Council as a communications and engagement tool, is in the process of being updated and will be brought to Policy Committee in November. This will reference how, as Policy Committee has requested in June 2015, there will be clearer guidance around improved access to social media by staff and how this will be effectively risk managed through updated HR and ICT policies.
12. The Council's social media strategy is also in the process of being drafted to be brought to Policy Committee in November. Policy Committee in June 2015 approved broad agreement to the move towards a strategic use of social media channels to achieve the Council's Strategic Plan and shift towards a people, place and culture-based approach rather than an organisation-centric focus to be more appealing and engaging to local residents.
13. The Council is currently procuring a new social monitoring system which will help to implement the social media control, monitoring and response and allow content to be spread

across relevant accounts. This will also support the best value for money way to resource to maintaining multiple accounts.

The new digital eco-system

14. The discovery phase is already under way to replace the Council's current intranet with a new digital 'eco-system' which will include a range of online tools which will support employees to do their jobs more efficiently.
15. Included in the scope of this work stream will be a new staff ideas platform. The current platform (called Wazoku) has powered Eureka! since October 2013. A 70% increase in the platform cost has meant that it no longer represents good value for money so alternative platforms are being considered as part of this work.
16. The new intranet (and ecosystem) is due to launch by the end of May 2016 although the plan will be for a phased delivery of new tools over the next eight months.

Other digital developments

The new schools portal (replacement for Wired)

17. The Wired platform is an extranet that allows communication between the Council and our schools. It also served as a document store of all the latest policies and was used to link to other management systems such as finance and reporting.
18. Wired needed to be updated and was considered not fit for purpose in terms of content and customer experience. It also needed to be replaced due to the platform no longer being technically supported.
19. The Council's digital team used the Digital First principles and approach to build a new platform (supported by ICT) using the same Content Management System (CMS) as the new website. This is called the schools portal and is an extranet (part of the site can only be accessed by schools who have log on permissions). A key benefit is securing better value for money as it is built on a free CMS, called Umbraco.
20. Schools were engaged and consulted through a range of methods, including visits to schools, interviews with head teachers and administration staff and a bespoke consultation event with head teachers.
21. Feedback pre and post launch, which took place on 29 September 2015, has been overwhelmingly positive. The heads of the schools at the consultation event said that the new site represented huge strides forward on the previous site, more user-friendly and intuitive, time-saving. It has helped to build on the Council's relationship with schools and represents a fit for purpose platform which can be developed further.
22. There is now the potential to use the schools portal to help protect the income delivered through the sale of services.

23. This version of the site is part of the first phase and there are plans to make further improvements over the coming year. Head teachers have put forward a number of suggestions as to how the site could be further developed.

Microsite development

24. Running simultaneously with the new website development, the Council's digital team have been involved in and will continue to deliver a range of microsites. This has already included:

- **Schools portal** – see section above.
- **Pop up theatre** – this was for the Libraries service and the microsite included pages for different performances (called A Boy and a Bear in a Boat <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/popuptheatre/boymbearboat>; and Oddly <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/popuptheatre/oddly>). This can be viewed at <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/popuptheatre> and demonstrates the Council's high quality in-house digital design skills. The microsite enabled the Libraries service to sell tickets online using Eventbrite and the percentage of online ticket sales for performances was high.
- **Nottinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Board** – the new microsite with improved content and functionality is due to launch shortly.

25. Future microsites that the digital team will also deliver include:

- **Web presence for the Combined Authority/Devolution Deal** – this is the Council's contribution to a shared resource approach with other partners to deliver communications activity to help keep residents informed and support the bid.
- **Celebrate** – the microsite for the Registrations service, which includes consideration of a pilot to sell online advertising to test whether the Council can generate an income from this.

Summary

26. This paper summarises the latest progress on the Digital First project and also references other digital developments which are being done as part of 'business as usual' by the digital team. Most of the work is being undertaken concurrently and represents an unprecedented level of activity in this area.

27. Consideration is currently being given to what happens post-Digital First as whilst the main digital platforms will all have been transformed by May 2016 when the project is due to end, the digital needs are not likely to reduce anytime soon. This reflects changed customer behaviour with people accessing more services online and the need to continue to make savings which cheaper online transactions will play a significant role in delivering. Recommendations on what happens post May 2016 will be brought to a future Policy Committee.

Other Options Considered

28. To continue with the current website and usage of social media – both of these options were ruled out due to the need to support the delivery of savings through a customer-centric website and social media strategy.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

29. To deliver online services that are so good that those that can will choose to use them.

Statutory and Policy Implications

30. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

All expenditure attached with these work streams will be contained within existing budgets. Any divergence from this position will be brought back before Members.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

- 1) Notes the progress made to date, including the successful launch of the Council's new website and schools portal
- 2) Approves the approach and timetable to deliver a new intranet and social media strategy and policy.

Alan Rhodes
The Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Martin Done/Clare Yau

Constitutional Comments (SSR 21/09/15)

31. The recommendations fall within the terms of reference for Policy Committee.

Financial Comments (SES 22/09/15)

32. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All