

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION – PROGRESS UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on progress to date with the Council's digital transformation project – Digital First – with an emphasis on the work to develop a new public website nottinghamshire.gov.uk and other digital services. The report will also seek agreement for the overall approach, principles and methodology along with the method of communication with members.

Information and Advice

2. The Digital First project forms part of the overall Customer Access and Digital Development programme which sits within the Cross Council Portfolio as part of the new Redefining Your Council approach.
3. One of the project's main outcomes is, by September 2015, to deliver a modern website and associated customer journeys that are so good that those who can, will choose to use them. The improvements will lead to an increase in satisfaction and lower transaction costs.
4. As part of the project, six work streams were established with the following identified leads from different service areas:
 1. **Infrastructure, support and systems – ICT lead (Sue Milburn)**
 2. **Design, content, usability – Digital lead (Sarah Lay/Andy Lowe)**
 3. **Top customer journey improvements – CSC lead (Marie Rowney)**
 4. **Social media – Communications lead (Clare Yau)**
 5. **Review of extranets and microsites – Communications lead (Paul Belfield)**
 6. **Intranet and employee engagement tools
– joint HR/Communications leads (Helen Richardson/Marie Lewis)**
5. The mission, activity, outcomes, approach and benefits along with the timelines can be seen on the Blueprint on a Page diagram (Appendix 1). Regular project updates have been posted on a dedicated blog <https://digitalfirstnotts.wordpress.com/>.
6. During the past five months since the start of the project, considerable progress has been made in all of the six work streams with some clear actions and deliverables. This paper

primarily focuses on the first three work streams that are designed to deliver a new responsive, customer-centric and transactional website for the authority by September 2015. Progress in the other work streams is also referenced and, in some cases, will be subject to separate reports being brought back to Policy Committee in the coming months.

7. The current website nottinghamshire.gov.uk receives an average of 182,000 unique visitors a month and is increasingly a customer's first point of contact. More than 40% of our website traffic comes from non-desktop devices, such as smart phones and tablets, and some of our customers are accessing online services with assistance from the Customer Service Centre, our officers or friends and family.
8. As the move towards more digital delivery continues to accelerate, the Council needs to understand how best it can meet the needs of these customers through our website. At the same time, the project will enable significant savings for the local authority due to the significantly lower transaction costs online (£0.09p) compared to telephone (£4.79) or face to face (£9.14). It is estimated that only a third of our transactions are currently online so the potential for savings is significant.
9. Digital solutions were also identified in preliminary analysis of nearly £10m worth of savings proposals for the Council.
10. A recent think tank report by the Policy Exchange states that using technology and data in a smart way could save local authorities £10bn by the end of the next parliament. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11368653/Council-tax-could-be-paid-with-apps-report-suggests.html>

Progress

Approach

11. Working out the "optimal shape" of a new nottinghamshire.gov.uk involves finding and understanding the needs of our users and, then, establishing how best to meet those needs by grouping and prioritising information. An initial content inventory of our existing site revealed more than 25,000 pages – many of which are never or rarely accessed or updated.
12. The steps that are being taken are as follows:
 - Develop and understand the user needs – personas developed to represent a range of users. A sample persona can be seen in Appendix 2
 - Produce a working prototype/design concept that can be tested with real users
 - Build an information architecture that is intuitive for the user – established by holding card-sorting workshops where users are asked where they would expect to find different types of content
 - Streamline the content - cluttering up websites with irrelevant content simply makes relevant content harder to find. As a rule the top 5% of content accounts for 25% of the traffic, with the next 20% of the content accounting for the next 55%. This shows the importance of prioritising the most useful and most used content first and removing the irrelevant.
 - Build an Alpha site – a website that meets the core needs of users which can then be tested with Digital and IT to understand best use of systems and integration

- Test a Beta site – once it is established that the website works, it is then put out to public testing with real users and stakeholder groups so that further refinements can be made
 - Final website to go through professional User Access Testing – the final testing of the site before it goes into the Live phase
 - Ongoing improvement with usability testing with real users and stakeholder groups
13. The approach follows best practice established across industry and by leaders such as the Government Digital Service. It is in contrast to an approach that gets services online which are not optimised which can lead to lower satisfaction and an increase in avoidable contact on the more costly channels such as face to face or telephone.
14. Existing content standards are extremely variable due to multiple authors and no common standards or approach in place. In order to ensure consistently high standards, we have developed some documents that ensure a common ethos and design. The digital design philosophy can be seen in Appendix 3.
15. Sitting beneath these documents are a set of guidelines that translate the principles into delivery standards: content ethos, digital content standard and style guide. These reference documents, which are all available as background papers and part of the project documentation, will ensure that a common approach is taken to all digital development.
16. We are also actively seeking collaboration with other councils, with digital activity high across the sector as more organisations aim to make savings and increase satisfaction. Through involvement in the LocalGov Digital network (and other relevant networks) we're making use of their Pipeline platform to share our planned and current work and join up, as appropriate, with other Councils working on improvements to the same or similar services. This has already led to informal discussions with Warwickshire County Council and Devon County Council on one customer journey and being able to make use of user resources shared by West Berkshire for the Care Act.
17. In order to raise Nottinghamshire's profile nationally and support open working, we have launched the Digital First blog and are posting regular updates and sharing outputs on the site (<http://digitalfirstnotts.wordpress.com>).

Delivery

Workstream 1

18. An options appraisal has been completed for the Content Management System and this resulted in a recommendation to move to an Open Source system, Umbraco. The hosting environment has now been installed and User Acceptance Testing undertaken. Training has been completed by IT and Digital and a support agreement with an external supplier is in place.
19. Other dedicated systems will be developed or procured to deliver additional functionality such as smart forms, blogs, directories and e-payments.

Workstream 2

20. Content inventories have been carried out on the website (nottinghamshire.gov.uk) in order to understand more fully the current position. This activity identified around 25,000 pages on the website and allowed us to capture what the information is, where it is stored, online

traffic volumes, visits from mobile and tablets and visits from the Council's network (staff) all over a 12-month period. Additional information vital to the build of the new site was also captured and where possible enquiry volumes from the Customer Service Centre mapped to web pages. Similar relevant information was captured for the intranet.

21. This initial Discovery phase has also investigated website structure from the perspective of users. An external specialist agency, The Insight Lab, ran card sorting exercises with users around the county to determine how users understand and order information they might encounter. Understanding how users expect to find information helps to inform design and structure so that users can find what they are looking for quickly and easily.
22. The workshops, which were held in Worksop, Mansfield, Newark and West Bridgford, resulted in a number of recommendations about structure, content type and use of language that will be further tested over the coming months.
23. Three concepts have been developed for testing in order to establish a design direction. Due to the fast-moving nature of the medium, there is the need to build a website that is flexible and able to keep up with the increasing expectations of users.
24. From Spring 2015, content will begin to be publicly available as part of the development and testing of the new website. There will not be a 'big bang' approach to launching the new website but an iterative and ongoing rollout of content up until the new website date of September 2015, with work continuing thereafter to constantly improve and optimise the website as part of 'business as normal'.
25. An Alpha (prototype) of the new website has started to be built which will be tested using the personas. Once this has been tested in a controlled environment, a Beta site will be developed that will be available for public feedback to allow further refinement.

Customer journeys (previously Workstream 3)

26. A methodology (Appendix 4) has been developed to identify the priority customer journeys based on current volumes both on the website and at the Customer Service Centre, strategic priority, political priority and external factors.
27. When applied, this identified the top 20 customer journeys. Some of these journeys are currently online but not optimised which results in users contacting the Council directly by other means.
28. The number of journeys has increased considerably since the initial scope of five journeys. Resource limitations mean that not all of these journeys will be optimised by September although some will already be online. The process of iteration and improvement will also continue beyond the live stage.
29. Services will also be required to commit considerable resource to the process along with digital, ICT and customer service teams if they are to be a success. It is envisaged that services will own and lead their own customer journeys with the support of a specialist team made up of ICT, customer services and digital. This concept has worked well to date with the work on the Care Act.
30. It is expected that the following journeys will be delivered first:

- **Care Act** – online assessment of social care needs along with a pathway to the information and advice for self-funders portal provided by Open Objects
- **Residential Waste permits** – creation of an in-house solution to allow households to register up to 2/3 cars through an online portal
- **Concessionary travel passes** – enhanced ability to apply for all passes online including renewals and e-payments for lost passes
- **Streetlight and pothole reporting** – improvement of the current facility to reduce the number of duplicate reports and allow progress tracking for customers
- **Search and apply for a job** – currently being developed and refined with WCN (eRecruitment supplier) to allow both the front end (search and apply for a job) to be optimised and integrated with the back end (processing of the applications)
- **Disruption** – integrated solution to provide residents with access to information about winter weather, flooding and service disruption. Likely to include enhancement of the current operation to include live tracking of gritters using the Masternought GPS data

Workstream 4 – Social Media

31. Policy Committee approved the Council's first social media policy in December 2012. Its main focus is the safe and legal use. It is recognised that this now needs to be expanded and updated to reflect a more strategic approach to social media.
32. The Council's use of social media has been audited by an independent expert agency to reveal how the medium is being used by the authority and to make recommendations about the future direction that will include a more streamlined and co-ordinated approach.
33. A recent national survey by accountancy firm BDO UK found that two-thirds of councils now use social media and 77% of these believe it leads to cost savings if used correctly. Councils identified that they saw a reduction in telephone calls and face-to-face contact.
34. It is recommended that a further paper is brought back to Policy Committee in April 2015 that updates the social media policy and recommends a new strategic approach.

Workstream 5 – Microsites and Extranets

35. Microsites and extranets can provide distinct advantages with the opportunity for flexibility of design and dedicated areas for specific services or functions. However, without comprehensive business planning, these sites can become costly (both in development and maintenance) and provide a frustrating customer experience as they are forced to adapt to different user interfaces.
36. The development and growth of the Council's microsites and extranets has grown organically, based on an individual perceived need at the time, with little strategic planning or consideration for how they all inter-relate with each other, the Council's main website and intranet, and the organisation's wider priorities.
37. An audit was conducted to build a master list of microsites and extranets that were either managed by the Council or where the Council was a significant partner or stakeholder. From responses across the department, **56 separate sites** were identified.
38. Some of these sites have incurred significant set-up costs along with ongoing hosting costs. From where costs are known the average cost for each site can be estimated as £8,614.

Multiplied by the 38 sites where the Council is incurring costs this offers the potential savings of **£327,332** if all the sites are closed or migrated. This, however, should be treated as a top-end estimate, as it is uncertain if all sites will be closed. The budgets for these sit within the service areas. These estimates also do not account for the additional human resource of Council employees keeping information up to date. Also there may be additional costs associated with the migration of content which have yet to be ascertained.

39. As a result of the audit and discussions with service areas, three different approaches have been suggested: close down immediately; migrate to the main website; retain the site and make improvements where appropriate.
40. In the process of reviewing all the microsites and extranets, one site required additional attention and a different approach. Wired is the extranet used by the Council to communicate with schools. The site is more than 15 years old and from September 2015 the contract with Capita will end and the system will no longer be supported. Rather than consider what Wired should be replaced with, the approach has been to consider what the Council and schools need going forwards.

Workstream 6 – Digital tools for employees (including intranet)

41. This work stream is scheduled to deliver towards the end of the project (April 2016). Work has started to understand more clearly what the needs of the users are along with an audit of what is currently offered and how it is used. This includes a review of staff survey results, the mapping of the intranet site and analysis of staff data to gain a better understanding of the needs.

Resource prioritisation

42. There are a number of competing demands of the Digital First project. There is also the need to deliver 'business as normal' and to support services with budget savings proposals. The Council's needs are also changing and evolving as services undergo transformation as part of ongoing Redefining Your Council work. So, resources are critical for the delivery of the Digital First project.
43. The development timetable means that the delivery groups (digital, ICT and customer services) need to prioritise work demands according to set criteria. Digital, ICT and customer service teams are working closely to ensure that resource is prioritised to the successful delivery of the digital first project and to those initiatives that are either business critical or are likely to deliver significant benefits. An approach to prioritise new requests from departments is being refined to ensure that there is joint agreement between these teams about what the priorities are and the level of resource being assigned to each initiative.

Delivery timetable

44. The new website is on course to be delivered by September 2015 although delivery of the top 20 customer journeys will need a phased delivery. Both aspects are subject to resource needs being met. It is anticipated that this will coincide with the implementation of the final phase of the social media strategy and the delivery of the alternative to the existing schools extranet Wired and work on the intranet / employee engagement solution.

Communication and stakeholder engagement

45. Due to the high profile nature of this major transformation project, it is recommended that members are kept up to date with the following: a report to Policy Committee every two months, the creation of a member digital champion and regular updates through a public blog at <https://digitalfirstnotts.wordpress.com/>

Other Options Considered

46. None

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

47. To deliver a modern website and associated customer journeys that are so good that those who can, will choose to use them. This will lead to an increase in satisfaction and a lower transaction cost that will enable financial savings to be made across the authority.

Statutory and Policy Implications

48. 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

This transformation project is supporting the delivery of significant savings for the authority with preliminary work identifying more than £10m of proposals requiring a digital solution. Further savings are expected to be delivered as part of the project as more people choose to transact online rather than more expensive channels. So far £506k has been allocated from the Strategic Development Fund which was approved by members to fund the transformation.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

- 1) Notes the progress made to date by the Digital First project
- 2) Approves the overall approach to digital improvement outlined in this paper
- 3) Approves the digital design philosophy that will underpin a new digital policy that will be brought back for approval by Policy Committee
- 4) Approves the methodology used to identify the priority customer journeys
- 5) Agrees the approach to member communications outlined in this report

Alan Rhodes
Leader of the Council

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:
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Constitutional Comments (HD – 30/1/2015)

49. The recommendations within the report fall within the remit of Policy Committee.

Financial Comments (SEM 02/02/15)

50. The financial implications are set out in the 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.

- Digital content ethos
- Digital content standard
- Digital Style guide
- Top 20 Customer Journeys
- Site Ethos

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All