



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3RD JUNE 2014

SUBJECT: CORPORATE WEBSITE RE-DESIGN

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the background, plan and estimated costs related to the redesign of the Authority's corporate website and progress so far, as requested by a Member of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 4th March 2014.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Authority's existing corporate website has been in place since 1st September 2008. Since that time, the technologies available and the expectations of citizens and other users have become more sophisticated. As this is the case, a redesign of the facility was deemed to be required and a project initiated to deliver an enhanced solution during 2014.
- 2.2 During the early phases of this project initiation process, it became apparent that the need for enhanced on-line facilities had been identified by colleagues from across the Authority working on the Empowering Individuals and Communities (EIC) initiative. This initiative aims to provide information :
- in a more accessible and task orientated way,
 - to meet our Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill supply of information duties,
 - on the whole range of community services and resources not just those provided by the Council and
 - offer opportunities for transformational change to improve services and reduce costs.
- 2.3 The recognised synergies between the two projects resulted in the decision to combine the planning processes to ensure that the website redesign satisfied industry best practice, the enhanced expectations of website users and the on-line requirements of the EIC initiative.
- 2.4 This approach was adopted to save money, utilise scarce staff resources as effectively as possible, consolidate sources of information and eliminate duplication of effort expended maintaining up to date information.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This combined initiative is underpinned by the following legal and strategic frameworks :
- Welsh Government ICT Strategy for the Public Sector in Wales
 - Welsh Government Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure Policy

- UK Government ICT Strategy and Strategic Implementation Plan
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill
- Strategy for Older People In Wales
- Carers Measure
- The National Service Frameworks
- LSB Citizen Engagement Strategy
- CCBC Citizen Engagement and Communication Strategy
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- WHQS - Welsh Quality Housing Standard
- Adult and Children's Social Services Improvement Plan
- Mental Health Strategy
- CYPP Engagement Strategy
- "Caerphilly Delivers" - the Local Service Board Single Integrated Plan
- CCBC Strategic Equality Plan 2012 - Objective 4 - Communication Access

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Following on from a request made at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 4th March 2014, this report provides information regarding the background, planning and estimated costs related to the redesign of the corporate website.

The Current Website

- 4.2 The current website is based upon an in-house developed content management system utilising the industry standard web technologies of the time. The solution was put into live use on 1st September 2008 and is underpinned by a content classification structure based upon the Local Government Navigation List and Local Government Service List in accordance with the best practice guidelines of the time.
- 4.3 It should be noted that the website has not remained static since its inception as elements have evolved and new facilities added over the years. However, it is acknowledged that the needs and demands of users have matured and become more sophisticated during this period. The technologies utilised by the existing website are not capable of meeting these enhanced requirements and as such a radical redesign is required.

Content and Content Management

- 4.4 Currently, members of staff from the E-Government Team based in the ICT and Citizen Engagement Department work proactively and reactively with the Authority's service areas to facilitate the maintenance and development of content made available through the website.
- 4.5 The existing website has over 700 informational pages that are enhanced by third party and bespoke applications that allow members of the public to interact online with the Council. In addition to being a means of providing information, the existing website offers facilities that include the ability to :
- Request services (e.g. street cleansing, marriage, birth and death certificates, etc.)
 - Report an issue / problem (e.g. abandoned vehicles, etc.)
 - Apply for :
 - jobs with the Council
 - Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction
 - trading licences
 - planning permission
 - free school meals

- Pay online for Council Tax, Council Housing Rent, etc.
- View planning applications and submit comments
- Check if schools are open
- Search for non-exempt committee documents
- Contact and raise queries with a variety of service areas

Current Performance and Benchmarking

- 4.6 Statistics on the use of our website are collected and analysed on a monthly basis. The variety of information collected includes the number of unique visitors, hits on pages, searches undertaken, type of device used to access the website, etc. The collection of these statistics substantiates the high volume of usage of the existing website. Recent analysis shows the following :
- Average monthly unique visits – 59,146
 - Average monthly page views – 326,017
 - The website’s internal search facility is used in approximately 11% of unique visits
- 4.7 Research undertaken in the UK has stated that mobile access to websites was approximately 13% in March 2012 and over 27% in March 2013. This research predicts that mobile access to websites is likely to be over 50% by the end of 2014. Statistics for our existing website collected over the past four months show that an average of 47.8 % of visitors did so using a mobile device which is in line with the national research. It has therefore been deemed essential that any redesign must make effective access via a mobile device a priority.
- 4.8 The Society of IT Management (SOCITM) undertakes an annual assessment of the UK’s local authorities’ websites. This Better Connected Survey incorporates an evaluation of each website’s facilities and users are surveyed to ascertain their opinion and satisfaction levels. The existing website has been ranked consistently as a “top ten” performer in many of the categories in recent years. However, although customer satisfaction ratings have remained high, in the latest survey our website has been re-classified from a three star to a two star site. This has been attributed to its poor accessibility rating when viewed via a mobile device and limited map-based information provision.
- 4.9 Local authorities across the UK, including a number of our neighbours, have recently redesigned their websites or are in the process of doing so. Predominantly this has been done to improve their usability on mobile devices.

The Redesign Project – Two Workstreams Coming Together

- 4.10 This project has pulled together two distinct workstreams :
- The cross-directorate EIC workstream and
 - The programme of work of initiated by the ICT and Citizen Engagement Department to redesign the Authority’s website.
- 4.11 As detailed in an initial report to Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 23rd May 2013 and subsequent one on 6th February 2014, EIC is a cross-directorate initiative in response to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill. This Bill emphasises a number of general duties on local authorities and partner agencies including promoting individual well-being; provision of a range of preventative services; promoting social enterprises, co-operatives and user led services and the third sector; and the provision of information, advice and assistance. The information requirement is much wider than merely social care information incorporating all of the information that a citizen might need when wishing to interact within their community and the wider geographical area. It should also be noted that there is a duty to provide information on services and support available in the community and not just that provided by the Authority.

- 4.12 The initial EIC working group identified the need to coordinate its work with any new developments planned for the corporate website. Since the Council website has a proven record of attracting high volumes of visitors and therefore acknowledged as a well-used source of information, a decision was made to ensure that any EIC information system should form part of the Council's website.
- 4.13 Whilst the EIC initiative was being formulated, the ICT and Citizen Engagement Department had identified the need for the website to be revamped to address usability issues such as access via mobile device, geographic / map-based visualisation of information and more ready access to transactional services online. Given the resource constraints that affect the Department, a procurement process was undertaken to engage a suitable partner to provide additional technical web development and graphic design capacity to supplement that available internally. A key requirement of this procurement process was to engage a proven successful partner with experience of developing websites that utilise a 'responsive design' that recognises the size and type of device being used to access the website and automatically modifies the layout delivered to fit the screen in question.
- 4.14 After receiving approval from CMT, the two workstreams were formally brought together and a project management structure created drawing representation from a broad range of business areas within the Authority and partner organisations. Greater detail regarding this structure and associated outline project plan is provided in Paragraphs 4.25 to 4.29 below.

Benefits Realisation

- 4.15 The redesigned website will deliver a number of benefits including :
- significantly improved search facilities
 - simplified navigation and quicker access to services, information and advice
 - solution will be optimised for improved use on mobile devices
 - fit for purpose facilities offering a greater number and improved self-service options for the citizen and those who support them
 - user-focused design both in terms of the language used and its provision of task oriented facilities.
- 4.16 Information will be organised so that the user will be presented initially with a list of the most popular tasks / services based on analysis undertaken on a regular basis. This set of "top tasks" will be present on the home page as a generic suite and on subsequent pages as context sensitive based upon the service area concerned. Such an approach will mean that users will be able to access the most common information and services as quickly as possible. This facility is to be supplemented with a more prominent and enhanced search facility with auto-complete functionality that will suggest the most likely search terms. These services will make it more likely that the visitor will have a positive experience and successful outcome.
- 4.17 Visitors using mobile devices to access the existing website are likely to find the experience difficult as the content displayed would be too small for straightforward viewing and selection of on-screen options. The redesigned website will have simplified navigation and content structures displayed in a "responsive" manner. Such an approach will deliver an optimised viewing experience providing easy to read and navigate content minimising the need for resizing, panning and scrolling on mobile devices with smaller display screens such as smartphones.
- 4.18 The redesigned website will offer the improved user experience outlined together with the "all day, every day" availability of on-line facilities to allow our citizens to discover information and access many provisions via self service functionality. Adopting such an approach will generate benefits for our "ready adopter" citizens and the Authority delivering both time and money savings as on-line interaction is a lower cost option when compared to face-to-face or telephony channels. The nationally accepted estimated costs per transaction for each of these channels are outlined below :

- Face to face - £8.62
- Telephone: £2.83
- Web self service - £0.15

- 4.19 The online self-service capability is in line with the Welsh Government and UK Government Digital Inclusion agenda as well as their plans for a digital government with the majority of the services available online. The EIC initiative has acknowledged that many residents without their own ICT facilities could access the new website with the assistance of family, friends or neighbours or through the public access facilities found in our libraries.
- 4.20 In addition to those main objectives and benefits described, there will be other additional advantages such as devolved content management. As the new website matures, enhanced facilities will be made available to selected officers from within the service areas to allow the maintenance of appropriate elements of their own content. This will help to ensure the information is current and accurate and allow a greater degree of flexibility and responsiveness associated with the website.

Budget and estimated costs

- 4.21 Funds for this project have been set aside from Social Services Directorate and ICT and Citizen Engagement budgets during the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years. It is estimated that total expenditure for the initial redesign and development will total approximately £81k one-off spend from service reserves across the two financial years. Expenditure incurred in 2013/14 is approximately £52.5k and is made up as follows :
- ICT and Citizen Engagement – £25.5k
 - Social Services - £27k
- 4.22 The ICT and Citizen Engagement expenditure has covered the technical infrastructure including servers and software purchases and associated set-up costs whilst the Social Services contribution has paid for the website development work undertaken during the 2013/14 financial year. It is predicted that the remaining budget £28.5k will be sufficient to deliver the redesigned website project during 2014/15.
- 4.23 The sum funded from the ICT and Citizen Engagement 2013/14 budget included payment for three years' support and maintenance charges for the content management system used to facilitate this development. As this is the case, no annual charges are anticipated until the 2017/18 financial year. Based upon current charges, those for 2017/18 onwards are estimated to be approximately £1k p.a. Funds will be made available from the ICT and Citizen Engagement budget at that time.
- 4.24 It should be noted that the nature of this technology and the evolution and demands of service areas mean that it is likely that additional expenditure will be required in the future as and when needs dictate. The business cases underpinning such demands will be assessed as they come forward to ensure that further investment is justified.

On-Going Plan and Progress Made

- 4.25 The project management structure consists of:

- Website Redesign Project Management Group

This group is supported by a number of task and finish sub-groups dealing with the following specific subjects:

- Content and content management
- Service user testing and evaluation
- Marketing
- Style guide and database proforma

- 4.26 Representatives of the ICT and Citizen Engagement Department, Social Services Directorate and the task and finish groups have undertaken initial consultation exercises with officers and residents possessing a wide range of computer literacy skills. Their findings have been considered and used to inform the model on which the development of the prototype website is based.
- 4.27 At the CMT meeting of 13th February 2014, it was agreed that the combined approach to the redesign of the website to meet the needs of both the body corporate and the EIC initiative. Other options available were not pursued as they would have resulted in :
- Increased overall costs,
 - Disjointed / duplicated content and services provision and / or
 - More limited content and functionality.
- 4.28 At the CMT meeting of 13th February 2014 a commitment was given to demonstrate a prototype design to ensure that CMT was happy with the concept before further significant development was undertaken. This demonstration took place at a subsequent CMT meeting held on 8th May 2014 and agreement to proceed was given. The importance of ensuring that appropriate public consultation is undertaken prior to go-live was emphasised and the project plan has been adjusted accordingly.
- 4.29 The outline project plan is as follows:

Task	Dates (Start – Finish)
Consultation (CMT, Members, Staff, Public)	30/04/2014 – 05/09/2014
Development & Initial Content Creation / Migration	30/04/2014 – 14/08/2014
Training For ICT Staff	26/06/2014 – 27/06/2014
Hardware, Software, Platform Commissioning	01/07/2014 – 04/07/2014
Deployment	14/08/2014 – 22/08/2014
Testing / Post-Consultation Development	25/08/2014 – 31/10/2014
Marketing To Public, Officers And Members	01/09/2014 – on-going
Go-Live	06/10/2014
Post Go-Live Activity	06/10/2014 – 31/10/2014

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All public sector websites in Wales must comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, which covers disability issues. The new website will achieve this by meeting W3C(World Wide Web Consortium) Priority 2 guidelines which is the EU recommended level of compliance. These guidelines cover areas such as colour contrast, ease of navigation by keyboard only and the ability for screen readers to read the content of pages.
- 5.2 The redesign proposal and expenditure estimates include a Welsh language version of the website as the provision of a bilingual website is a requirement under the Welsh Language Act 1993 and will continue to be from 2015 under the new national Welsh Language Standards. Discussions are progressing to ensure appropriate business processes are in place to achieve this. The “top tasks” and certain sections will be bilingual from launch and other content will be updated in a timely manner, which will now be easier to achieve given the reduction in the amount of text-per-page.
- 5.3 As an on-line resource, the availability of community information may be more accessible to marginalised or minority individuals, groups or on-line communities. For those who lack digital access there are opportunities for officers, elected members, other agencies and the voluntary sector to be empowered to give information face to face, as the website will be designed to facilitate use on mobile telephones and tablet devices capable of internet access. There are also opportunities to help those individuals access this information through digital inclusion and access to computers through community resources e.g. libraries.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications relating to this report as budget provision has been allocated as outlined within the body of the report.
- 6.2 The estimated costs of the project are outlined in Paragraphs 4.21 to 4.24. It should also be noted that internal staff across directorates will have to dedicate time to ensure the successful delivery of the project and its future significance to the citizen and service provision.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report although it should be noted that selected internal staff resource from across the Authority will be required to dedicate time to the project to ensure its successful implementation.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All comments received are contained within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the report is noted for information.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The report contains information for the consideration by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 This report is for information only. The activities described in this report are to comply with the proposals set out in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill and ICT associated best practice guidance.

Author: - Paul Lewis, Development Manager
Consultees: - Cllr Barbara Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
- Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer
- Steve Howells, Service Manager - Older People
- Mandy Sprague, Development Officer for Older People
- Alessandra Veronese, E-Government Team Leader / Programme Manager
- Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager
- David Titley, Customer Service Manager
- David Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)

Background Papers:

- ICT Programme and Projects Working Documents
- Minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 4th March 2014
- Report to CMT on 13th February 2014 - *Empowering Individuals and Communities*
- ICT Annual Service Improvement Plan 2013-2014
- Welsh Government, *Delivering Digital Inclusion: A Strategic Framework for Wales* (Dec 2010)
- Welsh Government *ICT Strategy for the Public Sector in Wales* (2011)

- Report by the Digital Wales Advisory Network to Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AM Minister for Business Enterprise Technology & Science, *Digital First - Delivering Welsh Public Services Online* (Dec. 2012)
- Bevan Foundation Report funded by Welsh Government, *Digital By Default? Online public services and digital inclusion in Wales* (July 2011 – released April 2012)
- Welsh Assembly Paper, *e-enabled citizen access to public services* (Dec. 2006)
- Welsh Assembly Paper, *e-Wales strategy* (April 2006)
- Welsh Assembly Report, *Making the Connections - Delivering Beyond Boundaries* (Nov 2006) following the Beecham Review of Local Service Delivery
- Welsh Assembly Report, *Making the Connections* (Oct. 2004)