POLICY FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

7 DECEMBER 2011

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

UPDATE ON PLANS FOR WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT

1.0 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To advise Members of the plans to improve and update the Council Web Site as requested at the July PFA meeting.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 **For Members to be aware and provide comments on the options being considered to improve and update the Council Web Site.**

3.0 **BACKGOUND**

3.1 Responsibility for the Web site transferred to Communications Service in July 2011.
The Customer Services Task Group are overseeing the development of the web site project.

4.0 **KEY ISSUES**

4.1 Through the Customer Services Task Group a 'critical friend' exercise was carried out in April 2011 to identify user feedback on the current web site. The feedback has been used to indentify issues and make changes to the web site where appropriate. Generally the feedback was positive however it is acknowledged that the web site requires further development to be able to facilitate 'channel shift' i.e., fewer calls and more on line transactions and to meet requirements of customers.

Further research has been carried out using customer insight information that has identified the 'Top Tasks' that will inform where we develop the web site and identify future transactions on line. Council Tax enquires are the Council's top task based on insight information.

4.2 The Council Web site requires updating and it is the intention to encourage customers to use the Web site rather than telephone or face to face services where appropriate. The Web site is a more cost effective method of serving customers compared to telephone or face to face contact. Better on line services increase choice for customers.

The current version of Alterian CMS (our current web site) will start to become unsupported by the end of next year. Alterian recommends upgrading to V7. We have been happy with the Alterian software, the content editors find it easy to use and it has provided us with a professional website.

4.3 Reducing customer telephone contact to the Council by 5% is a Communications Service standard.

4.4 Reduction of calls will enable services more resources to be focused on those customers who have more complex needs and are more vulnerable and would benefit from face to face contact.

4.5   In order to achieve this 'channel shift' the Council must provide services on line that people will access and use effectively.

4.6   To date there are several transactions on line. These include reporting a missed bin, ordering a replacement bin and checking the waste collection days by address. These transactions on line have been available since late 2010.

4.7   Further transactions on line are being identified through the use of customer insight information.

4.8   Once identified the transaction process will be built on the CRM system and marketed. The marketing will also use customer insight information to target those groups of people who are more likely to use the transaction on line options. Mosaic profiling of Melton show that our largest group is 'D' and the Mosaic profiling suggests this group prefer internet as an access channel.

4.9   In order to improve the customer experience and encourage the use of transactions on line, the web site will be reviewed and updated with focus on the relevance and content of the information, ease of use for the customer and a system to keep information up to date and relevant to customers.

4.10   The web site will be developed taking into account the Customer Services Strategy that has been developed by Leicestershire County Council with partners. Melton Borough Council has been actively involved in the development of the strategy and progress has been communicated through the Customer Services Task Group.

4.11   In terms of testing the principles of the Strategy and linking with the original vision from the Varney report there are a number of emerging projects that Leicestershire plan to pilot that are relevant to the Web site development project in Melton, in particular the development and testing a single website portal for public services at the district level and exploring how we can move towards having a single view of customers.

4.12   A project mandate has been completed and is included elsewhere on the agenda for inclusion in the capital programme. The funding for which will be determined as part of the budget setting process.

5.0   **NEXT STEPS**

5.1   The following options have been identified and are being considered.

        Option 1 – keep current web site Implications – no major new functionality, however significant improvements could be made given sufficient resources however, support for this product will eventually diminish. Examples of improvements identified (and that we are currently working on) include:

        - Add a Live Twitter feed onto the front page
        - Improve images across the site
        - Audit the content, make sure it is concise, easy to read and makes sense.
        - Make sure the website comes high up in Google lists, especially for popular search terms
        - Make sure the search works accurately
        - Make sure all relevant pages are findable in the A-Z
        - Carry out Top Tasks and make sure they are easy to use
        - Update the FAQs so they are relevant to what customers are asking

- Sitemorse recommendations be carried out to improve the website's performance and usability
- SocITM recommendations be carried out to improve our ranking
- Investigate other functionality available currently to see if it would improve our site (e.g. use of Events calendar)

Option 2 – upgrade to Alterian V7
Upgrading would offer significant new functionality. Alterian are a worldwide CMS provider, who provides the CMS for large multinational corporations and a large number of UK public sector organisations (including the BBC website). Therefore they have the resources and stability to offer an advanced product in terms of technological development and quality. We would be able to offer personalisation (a 'My Melton' where customers can search by their postcode for example for services in their area.) mobile applications (being able to access our website effectively by using smart phones), forms (being able to fill in forms on line rather than having to email information.) "Suggest a service" (if a customer accessing one service the system would identify potential other services that may be relevant and flag them up.) and other functionality.

Option 3 – join the Web Unity Partnership
Melton has been invited to join the Web Unity Partnership. This is made up of Charnwood BC , Oadby & Wigston DC and others. They use the Cuttlefish platform to power their website and have the facility to start to share content. Personalisation would be possible, forms etc to an extent, and other development (e.g. mobile apps) would be available to purchase – at a shared cost with the other authorities. We would have the advantage of working in partnership with the other Leicestershire authorities, and would be a significant customer to Cuttlefish.

Option 4 – Cuttlefish
If personalisation (My Melton) is important, we could buy the personalisation module from Cuttlefish, and "bolt it on" to our current website.

5.2 Whichever option is chosen, adequate resources to install it properly and to maintain the website and improve it continuously will be required.

5.3 Other options have not been ruled out and will be considered on their merits as the project develops.

6.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 No decisions have been made to date regarding the web site. This report is to update and request comments. A further report will be issued when policy and corporate implications are known.

7.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 To upgrade the web site will incur expenditure. The level of expenditure will depend on the option chosen.

8.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

8.1 No decisions are being made to date regarding the web site. This report is to update and request comments. A further report will be issued when legal implications are known.

9.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

9.1   No decisions are being made to date regarding the web site. This report is to update and request comments. A further report will be issued when community safety implications are known.

10.0   **EQUALITIES**

10.1   No decisions are being made to date regarding the web site. This report is to update and request comments. A further report will be issued when equality implications are known. Accessibility issues are being considered and an EIA will be completed in due course.

11.0   **RISKS**

11.1   No decisions are being made to date regarding the web site. This report is to update and request comments. A further report will be issued when potential risks are known.

12.0   **CLIMATE CHANGE**

12.1   No decisions are being made to date regarding the web site. This report is to update and request comments. A further report will be issued when further implications are known.

13.0   **CONSULTATION**

13.1   As part of the project customer insight and consultation with users will be undertaken to inform decisions.

14.0   **WARDS AFFECTED**

14.1   All

Contact Officer   A Tebbutt
Date: 22 November 2011

Appendices :   None

Background Papers:

Reference :   X : Committees\PFA\2011 12\071211