

Web Development Project

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor John Bowman
LEAD OFFICER: Penny Mell
REPORT AUTHOR: Joanne Hayward

WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS?

The new website will give residents an easier way to access council services. They will be able to find information quicker and more easily; book, report, order and pay for more things on line, saving them time and money. The new website will be more user-friendly and accessible from a wider range of mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. We anticipate that by having a website that gives customers a good experience that we will be able to encourage more people to transact with us on-line thus shifting them away from the telephone or face-to-face contact with us.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?

(eg Key Decision, Policy recommendation for Full Council, at request of Council, etc.)

To approve the PID for the web development project.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive approves the PID for the web development project and the spend outlined within this.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The website is often the first contact people have with the council and therefore it is vital that it is professional and leaves customers satisfied. We want our website to help people transact with the council, easily find the information they are looking for and give them a welcoming and friendly experience. We also need to ensure that our next website is suitable for today's and tomorrow's technology. Our customers want to be able to pay their bills from their mobile phones and find out their nearest recycling site at the touch of a button.
- 1.2 Our current website is not meeting the needs of today's customer. It is difficult to maintain and is not accessible from a number of commonly-used browsers or

mobile devices. It is not fit-for-purpose for today and therefore will not allow us to add new functionality to meet future demands.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 With the rapidly-maturing Open Source market, we are in an ideal position to exploit this new technology and as a consequence, reap the rewards of flexibility, innovation, engagement and more effective communication. This new technology means we can create a new website, cheaper and more cost – effectively than before. The end result will be a website which will be much more responsive and easier to adapt and maintain.
- 2.2 We have a great opportunity with this project to build a website that is fit for purpose. We need a site that can be easily maintained and kept fresh and vibrant. It needs to go beyond the boundaries of a traditional local government site and become a wider resource for the whole community.
- 2.3 We propose to build a new website using Drupal, an Open Source piece of software, which lends itself to customisation and flexibility. Using Drupal we will be able to select a range of functions that we are currently unable to offer – this could include video, social networking integration, live chat, blogs or any number of other functions that customers tell us that they want from our website. The new website will look and feel very different to our current website. It will offer a range of enhanced features including a fast and effective search facility, which will enable customers to quickly and easily find what they are looking for. It is much more flexible and easier to adapt to changing needs.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Staying with our existing supplier would cost at least £40k to move to their latest version of the content management system and it still would not give us the level of functionality we desire or that is expected of a local authority website.
- 3.2 We believe we have chosen a cost-effective solution that will give us a website that is easy to keep fresh, can adapt to future changes in technology and will give customers a more than satisfactory experience.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 A project team is in place with a comprehensive project plan and programme of work which will deliver the first phase of the website by 18 May 2012. There will then be an opportunity to add further enhancements, subject to stakeholder feedback which will be delivered by 16 November 2012.

5. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer's comments are: Report contains realistic and robust proposals for project.
- 5.2 The Deputy Section 151 Officer's comments are: A revenue budget of £30,000 and a capital budget of £30,000 were approved by Council for this project on 22 February 2011
- 5.3 Other consultee comments, if any:

The MIS Manager and the Customer Services Manager have signed off the PID and are fully involved in the project.

6. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

- 6.1 There is a project team in place to deliver the project. The project team meets fortnightly and provides a fortnightly update report to the project sponsor.
- 6.2 The project has a risk register in place and risks are monitored at each project meeting.

7. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

- 7.1 The project will be able to access the capital and revenue from the current year budget and be able to procure products and services to deliver the new website.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Web Project PID

Background Papers
Summary Project Plan

WEB RE-DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT

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Author: Joanne Hayward

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1. Background

Our current website no longer provides the level of functionality that is needed to give customers a satisfactory service. Our website is not currently easily accessible via mobile phone or via a range of commonly-used browsers. If we wanted to stay with our current supplier we would have to move to a new version of their product at a cost of £40k plus we would have no scope for improving the functionality and service to customers. The customer services strategy recognises the need to provide customers with more opportunity to transact on-line. This is both more cost effective for the business and provides a better level of service to the customer. In order to do this we need to redevelop our website to embrace new technology, provide a wider range of functionality and drive more customers to the website and away from the telephone or face-to-face.

2. Business Case

This project supports the customer services strategy, the communications strategy and the corporate goal of 'delivering excellent and value for money services.' We plan to deliver a website which is fit for purpose. It will attract more customers to use the on-line services, provide easier access to information and services on-line, offer greater flexibility in what they can do on-line and be accessible from through a wider number of browsers and mobile platforms e.g. phones, tablets.

Key benefits will be a website which is

- easier to navigate,
- is accessible from more platforms,
- offers more services on-line and
- has increased functionality such as the ability to have videos on-line, book meetings, live chat, social media integration
- more flexible to meet future advances in technology and on-line access

We have chosen to move away from our current content management system as this is proving expensive to maintain and doesn't allow us to deliver the level of functionality that is demanded by customers. We are moving instead to an open source software provider called Drupal. This will be cheaper to implement and maintain and will have greater flexibility for future expansion.

In terms of equality and diversity, the new website will meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Level 2¹, which is the basic requirement for local government websites. This means the website will be accessible to all users and will take into account the prevailing Equality Act. There will be an audio facility for visually impaired users and the ability to tailor the look and feel of the site for users with colour blindness, dyslexia, motor impairment etc. We plan to have the website tested by the digital accessibility centre. They employ users with a wide range of disabilities. As an extra measure, should there be some aspect of the site that isn't accessible to all, then we will have a clear statement of why this is and how we can provide the information in an alternative format.

¹ <http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag>

3. Project Objectives and Scope

3.1 Project Objectives

Our vision is to create a website that

- Puts the customers' needs first
- Encourages channel shift
- Utilises the latest technology and
- Supports our brand

The new website will support the delivery of a number of the council's objectives within the 2011/12 council plan and will directly support the council's aims to provide a better online presence and encourage the use of e-services. It directly supports the performance goal of 'delivering excellent and value for money services.' It will also be a key component in supporting the customer services improvement plan and customer services strategy.

The project will be delivered in two phases with the first roll-out to the public of the new site scheduled for 18 May 2012.

By the end of phase one, we will have a new website that looks and feels different to our current site and with its enhanced features provides the customer with a much more satisfactory experience. It will be constructed in Drupal and will feature an enhanced search facility, multimedia capability, integrated social media and syndicated content otherwise known as 'rss feeds' for example news from the BBC, an enhanced 'find my nearest' function, an extended range of services that can be booked, paid for or requested on line.

We will then review the site and deliver further functionality for 18 November 2012. It is also envisaged that during the initial stakeholder engagement process we are likely to identify further ideas for content and/or functionality which we can add at a later stage. The new website will be easy to maintain and keep up-to-date. We will be able to add on further Drupal modules as we identify a need for them. Modules are plugins for Drupal that extend, build or enhance functionality. Some are core modules that allow Drupal to function whilst others are optional. Examples are the search facility, comment and search modules. Ones we might want at a later stage could include surveys and polls for example.

3.2 Project Scope

This is a stand alone project which will deliver an enhanced website. It links closely to the customer services strategy and will ultimate deliver some of the services to customers identified in that strategy.

As part of the project it will be necessary to audit all the various databases, software and systems that currently link to our current content management system, Immediacy, and identify how these will integrate with our new content management system. We will then be in a position to identify which new services we want to offer customers on-line. For example, this could include new e-forms.

Whilst the project may highlight issues regarding integration with the various systems that are employed throughout the council, it is outside the scope of this project to look at individual systems. This means that that the project will have to determine how our current systems used by licencing, planning or democratic services for example, link to our new

website software but the project will not make recommendations about these systems per se.

It will be outside the scope of this project to audit / review the current CRM system and make recommendations for change. However, the customer services manager is integral to the project and is looking at what aspects can be enhanced on the new website to give customers a greater range of products and services to access on line.

This project is only looking at the external website and will not cover the Intranet.

4. Project Deliverables

The project will deliver a new Copeland website which will be designed using software called Drupal. It will be developed to be a community resource that offers customers a far better experience than the current website. It will be easy to search, offer a wider range of services for customers to perform online, be accessible in more formats and encourage people to use the website as the first point of contact with the council.

The project will be delivered in two stages. Stage one will include stakeholder engagement, the design and build of the new website, user testing and launch on 18 May 2012. Stage two will include a review of the site and developing further functionality to be launched to the public in November 2012.

5. Project Approach

A project team has been set up to deliver the project comprising Penny Mell, Head of Policy, Performance and Transformation (project sponsor), Joanne Hayward (project manager), Ian Curwen, Stephen Fawcett, Julia Jackson, Rob Somerville, Sarah Mitchell, Holly Freestone. Marlene Jewell and Susan Blair will work with the project team and advise on legal issues and process mapping.

A project plan has been produced which identifies a series of work packages that will need to be delivered to fulfil the project. These will be delivered by members of the project team along with input from Martin Stroud and Tim Capper.

The project team will meet on a fortnightly basis or more frequently if necessary.

6. Project Plan

A summary project plan can be found at appendix one.

7. Organisation – Roles and Responsibilities

Penny Mell, project sponsor- strategic direction and ensuring the project is delivered on time and within budget.

Joanne Hayward, project manager – day-to-day management of the project, leading the project team, ensuring work packages are delivered on time and to specification, communication and stakeholder engagement.

Rob Somerville – technical development, design, build and testing of website, integration with other systems.

Tim Capper – as data custodian, Tim will ensure the proposed content of the website meets our statutory requirements.

Susan Blair – Susan will provide process mapping expertise to the project and help to define how services offered on the website will be translated into the back office.

8. Stakeholder engagement and communication

A project communications plan is being written. We have identified three groups of stakeholders.

Influence	Involve	Inform
Chief Executive	Steering Group	SLT ¹⁰
Leader of the Council	Customer focus group	Local businesses
Cllr John Bowman	User testing group	Current web users
CLT ¹¹	Existing web authors /	Staff
Project Sponsor	Immediacy users	Members
Users / customers		Cross section of partners
(This group will change throughout the life of the project)		

Influencers will be consulted at regular intervals throughout the project. This will involve face to face meetings as well as project reports. They will help to shape the project and be responsible for key decisions along the way.

Stakeholders in this group will be involved in a more hands-on way. This will include participating in workshops, training sessions and user testing the new website.

This group will be kept informed about the project and invited to give their views. This will include communicating by newsletter, email and team meetings.

There will be a structured programme of continuous engagement throughout the project. For many stakeholders both internal and external, the level of engagement will be at the inform level. This means we will keep them updated at regular intervals on progress with the project through our regular communication channels such as Team Brief, The Latest Word, Staff Forum, and the weekly Members Briefing. The detail of this will be in the communications plan.

There will also be further engagement with a small group of stakeholders that will involve them in co-producing the finished new website.

Throughout the life of the project we will have a separate 'work in progress' website in operation where stakeholders will be able to engage with the project, leave comments, try

out new elements of the website whilst it is under construction and help to co-produce the site.

9. Resource Requirements

The project will require 80% of the time of Joanne Hayward, Web and E-Communications Officer from November 2011 until May 2012 and the same for Rob Somerville, IT Technical Support Officer. It will also require input from the project team and those tasked with delivering a work package.

The first stage of the project will take 6.5 months to deliver. This will cover stakeholder engagement, design and build and user testing for the new site.

The second stage will be delivered in month 12. After that point it will be an on-going process of continuous improvement rather than the need for a complete rebuild.

10. Project Costs

There is currently £30k capital identified in the 2011/12 budget for the web project. The project requires capital spend as follows (all costs are currently estimates)

Simple Message Service (SMS) will allow us to text message alerts to customers. Estimated cost £5k

2 x servers needed to host the new software to allow the new website to run - £11k

Storage Area Network (SAN). Memory needed to run the new website with its added functionality - £10k

We anticipate spending this money in January 2012.

There is also £30k revenue identified in the 2011/12 budget for the web project. The project requires revenue funding as follows and again all costs are currently approximate.

Accessibility audit / user testing and training/ code repair and accreditation - £10k

Plain English editing and web authoring, proofreading and plain English training - £6600

Graphic design £5k

The costs for the use of external expertise with accessibility and plain English editing will be spent in February and March 2012.

11. Project Quality

The project is being managed within the corporate project management framework and following PRINCE 2 principles.

12. Project Controls

The project plan has identified a suite of work packages that will be monitored on a regular basis by the project team to ensure they are on track to deliver to time and budget. The project team will meet fortnightly and the project manager will meet fortnightly with the project sponsor.

The project has been divided into 3 phases. Phase 1 will be completed by 30 January 2012, phase 2 by 18 May 2012 and phase 3 by 18 November 2012. A comprehensive phase plan will be produced and each phase will be signed off by the project sponsor.

CLT have been briefed and have requested an update in February 2012 and then quarterly.

Highlight reports will be produced fortnightly for the project sponsor and will be used to identify any issues or concerns with the project.

An exception report will be raised if the project appears to be delayed by more than two weeks or is likely to exceed budget by 10%.

13. Risk Management

A risk register has been produced which identifies risks and how they are being managed. The main risks are around reputation if we do not produce a website which is fit for purpose and meets the requirements of the customer and current legislation. Within the project the main risk is the reliance on the IT Support Officer and the amount of work that he is tasked to deliver.