Website strategy 2012

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Executive summary

The public increasingly use new technology to find information and interact with councils online. We should embrace this trend to provide a better service to our residents. Investment in these new channels of communication will provide significant savings, reducing the cost of supplying information and services.

This strategy proposes a five stage approach:

1. Find out **useful information** about how much it costs us to serve our customers using different channels of communication (eg web, phone, face-to-face), and identify opportunities for encouraging the use of cheaper channels of communication. This ties in with a Foresight project on Channel Shift.

2. **Invest in efficient processes** by integrating suitable front end web services with backend systems, and centralising the management of website content to improve the quality of content and a customers' online experience.

3. Focus on delivering content and functionality that customers want and find easy to use. We would do this by ensuring that the **top tasks** on the website are easy to complete (eg object to a planning application) and by removing obstacles to completing a task (eg Too much information about our policy on parking when most users want to find car parks in a town or pay a parking fine). Testing the effectiveness of top tasks regularly with our customers is key to achieving this.

4. Explore and develop uses of **new technologies**, including mobile applications for our top tasks, and the use of social media.

5. **Benchmark** the website's success against our peers and customers and **monitor** customer satisfaction and how they contact us.

Background

Most interactions with local councils are now made online. We really need to get the most popular, or top tasks, right so that residents and other target audiences get what they want from our online offering – quickly, easily, and, where relevant, without having to contact us.

Top task management

"The design of the website should be focused on top tasks. No longer should organisations aim for the most comprehensive website possible. Less is better!"

SOCITM advice, 2011

Top task management is about:

- Creating a more customer-focused website, with web content that speaks customer language, not organisation lingo.
- Managing with facts, not opinions: no more endless debates about what should and shouldn't be on our website. We need to get data that shows exactly what our customers want, and don't want.
- Having a simpler website - strip away all the filler content from our website. Create a clean, lean website that focuses on exactly what your customers want to do or find out about.

Gerry McGovern has developed the top task management model for websites. He is widely regarded as the number-one worldwide authority on helping large organisations create more customer-focused websites. He says:

> "Government websites have too often become data dumps for huge quantities of often low level information that is extremely hard to navigate and is written in lawyer-speak.
>
> Unfortunately, the objective does not seem to be to help the public but rather for the department to be able to say: "We've published it. It's on the website. Job done."
>
> The Top Tasks approach is different. It doesn't measure the input (the content) but rather the output (task completion)."

More information about Gerry McGovern: http://www.gerrymcgovern.com

Opportunity for achieving savings in the long-term

Whilst focusing on meeting customer needs is key to a successful website, our online offering should also be used to make us more efficient in the delivery of certain council services.

Corporate priorities

V - Value for money

A - Affordable housing

L – Leisure and lives

U – Understanding our residents' needs

E - Environment

Website vision

The vision for Waverley's website is:

1. to enhance customer experience online to improve lives and provide value for money for our council tax payers; and,

2. to increase cost effectiveness of supplying council information and services.

How do we achieve our vision?

To achieve our vision, we need to:

1. Gather useful information

In order to make informed choices and plans for the future, we need to find out:

How much does it cost us to serve our customers?

In 2009, Socitm Insight published data which show how much, on average, it costs an organisation to handle an initial contact with a customer via different communication channels:

Average customer contact costs
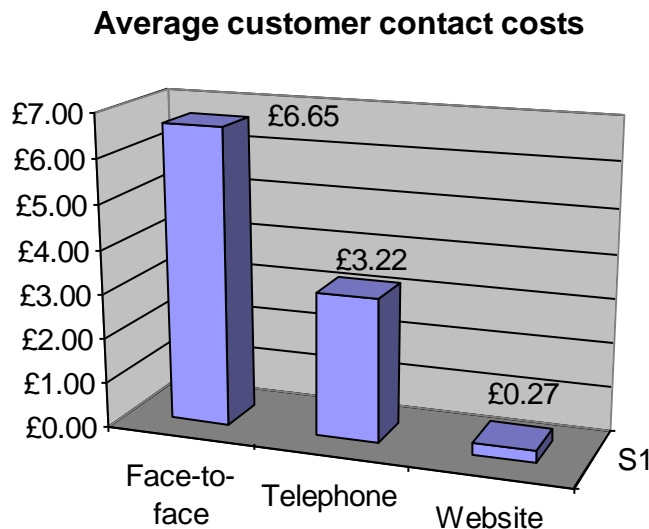
The cheapest communication channel by far is the web at £0.27 per customer contact compared with £3.22 for the phone and £6.56 for face-to face.

The comparable figures for Waverley are not known currently, as we have not previously collected this information.

What do customers contact us about? Which channels do they use?

If we are to identify the top tasks for each service, and identify which ones could be more efficiently delivered online, we need to know the numbers and types of queries we currently receive, broken down by channel of communication.

Appendix 1 shows the top 20 tasks on Waverley's website, identified through website visitor statistics collected via Google Analytics for the period January – June 2011.

Appendix 2 shows total visits to Waverley's website from February – October 2011.

Whilst we have data on website visits, we do not have the equivalent data for contacts through other channels. We need to carry out an exercise where services record how customers contact us, what they contact us about and how we contact them – similar to the NI14 National Indicator (Reducing avoidable contact).

How do customers want to communicate with us?

The way in which customers interact with the different services in Waverley will depend on what they need. We need to find out their preferred methods of communication for different key services. This will depend on the type of service they require and on their personal profile (age, sex, social status etc.).

Gathering this information will help us plan and deliver different services in the most cost effective and customer focused way.

2. Invest in efficient processes

If we are to improve our cost effectiveness, efficiencies and enhance customer experience online, we need to:

1. Integrate key relevant front end web services with backend systems

2. Make cheaper methods of communication with customers more effective

3. Centralise the management of website content to improve quality of content and make the process of updating the website more efficient. We will need extra central resource to achieve this.

3. Customer focus

We need to focus on delivering what customers want and make sure they can complete top tasks on our website quickly and easily. To do this we need to:

1. Identify and focus on improving top tasks online, ensuring we have online forms for all the relevant top tasks (see Appendix 1).   Online forms make it easy for the customer to complete their task online. They also ensure the relevant service receives all the information it needs to process and complete the task quickly and efficiently.

2. Review and reduce the amount of content on our website – removing obstacles to completing top tasks. If a customer does not find what they are looking for online, they will find another way to contact the council to get the information they want. If they call us or come to see us, it will cost us more.

3. Regular usability testing to identify obstacles to completing top tasks and make regular small improvements to our online offering.

4. Explore how customers can search for local services by their postcode using an improved version of 'Find my nearest…' (see www.exeter.gov.uk as an example).

5. Act as a local community website to signpost people to local information.

6. Set up online forms for every service.

4.   Explore innovative new technologies

To improve customer experience and realise efficient use of internal resources, we also need to develop and / or explore uses of:

1. Mobile web technologies and mobile apps
2. Social media – Twitter (a separate social media strategy to be produced)
3. Text messaging
4. Location based GPS services

5.   Benchmark website and monitor progress

We need to benchmark our website's success against our peers and our customers. We can measure:

1. Ease of use - through SOCITM reports and customer feedback (SOCITM take-up service and usability testing).

2. Cost effectiveness – through keeping regular records about how customers contact us and what they contact us for (see section 1 – Gather useful information, above).

Prepared by Vanessa de Chazal, Website Manager

Appendix 1 - Top tasks on Waverley.gov.uk

The table below shows the top 20 tasks on www.waverley.gov.uk, identified through web stats from Google analytics from January – June 2011. We need to carry out face-to-face research to full understand what our website visitors are trying to do on our site and how we can make sure they can complete their top tasks quickly and easily.

News is not a top task for our visitors

Visits to any news story on our website between February 2011 and October 2011 accounted for 2.58% of total website traffic. (Source: Google analytics – top content filtered by 'news'))
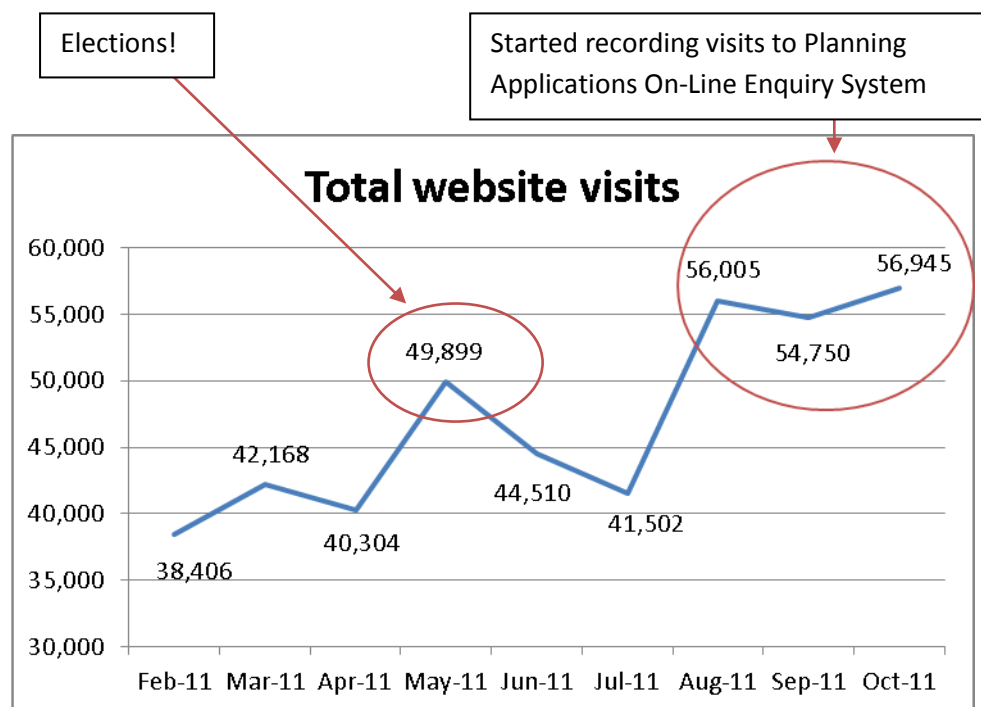
Page rank	Page Title	Pageviews	*Task*	Service owner of content	Grouping / hp on website	notes
4	Planning applications - Waverley Borough Council	29093	*Find / comment on planning applications*	Planning	Planning	
5	What's on Events - Waverley Borough Council	28823	*Find an event near you*	Comms	What's on	
7	Election Results - Waverley Borough Council	26447	*See election results*	Elections	Elections	only prominent around time of elections
8	Councillors - Waverley Borough Council	25358	*Find a councillor*	Democratic Services	About your council	
9	Contact details - Waverley Borough Council	18406	*How to contact us*	Comms	About your council	
10	Make a payment to the council - Pay for it - Waverley Borough Council	16148	*Pay for it*	Exchequer Services	Task	
11	About recycling sites in Waverley - Recycling sites in Waverley - Waverley Borough Council	15381	*Find a recycling site*	Environmental Services	Recycling, rubbish and waste	

Page rank	Page Title	Pageviews	Task	Service owner of content	Grouping / hp on website	notes
14	Please enter your street name, not postcode to check your bin collection day - Household refuse and recycling collections - Waverley Borough Council	12,614	*Check your bin day*	Environmental Services	Recycling, rubbish and waste	
15	Current Planning Applications - View Planning Applications - Waverley Borough Council	12,375	*View planning applications*	Planning	Planning	
16	Cinema at the Borough Hall - Waverley Borough Council	11,110	*see what's on at the borough hall cinema*	Borough Hall	Leisure / Going out - ?	
18	Jobs and careers - Waverley Borough Council	10,340	*Find a job*	HR	Jobs and careers	Main landing page - needs signposts and top tasks
21	About the Housing Register - Housing Register (Homechoice) - Waverley Borough Council	8,478	*find a home - join the housing register*	Housing Options	Housing	
22	Statement of nominations - Waverley Borough elections contested 2011 - Downloads - Waverley Borough Council	7,876	*Find out who has been nominated for the elections*	Elections	Elections	only prominent around time of elections
23	Planning Rules for Householders - Do I Need Planning Permission? - Waverley Borough Council	7,692	*find out if you need planning permission*	Planning	Planning	
24	Upcoming elections - Candidates standing for election 2011 - Waverley Borough Council	7,619	*Find out who is standing for election*	Elections	Elections	only prominent around time of elections
26	Museum of Farnham - Waverley Borough Council	7,052	*Visit the Museum of Farnham*	Museum of Farnham	Leisure	Main landing page - needs signposts and top tasks
27	Latest news - Waverley Borough Council	6,567	*See latest news*	Comms	About your council	

Page rank	Page Title	Pageviews	Task	Service owner of content	Grouping / hp on website	notes
29	Overview of car parks in Farnham - Car parks in Farnham - Waverley Borough Council	6,183	*Find a car park in farnham*	Parking	Parking and transport	
31	Find a planning form - Planning forms - Waverley Borough Council	5,748	*Find a planning form*	Planning	Planning	
33	Housing Options - Waverley Borough Council	5,735	*Find out about housing options*	Housing Options	Housing	

Appendix 2 – overall Waverley website stats

Chart showing Total website visits by month, February to October 2011.

Elections!

Started recording visits to Planning Applications On-Line Enquiry System

Total website visits

60,000

55,000

50,000

49,899

45,000

42,168

44,510

40,000

40,304

41,502

35,000

38,406

30,000

56,005

56,945

54,750

Feb-11 Mar-11 Apr-11 May-11 Jun-11 Jul-11 Aug-11 Sep-11 Oct-11

What is counted as a visit?
A visit is counted as the interaction between a visitor's browser and a particular website, ending when the browser is closed or shut down or when the user has been inactive on that site for a specified period of time.

For the purpose of Google Analytics reports, a visit is considered to have ended if the user has been inactive on the site for 30 minutes.

Traffic sources - how did people get to our website?
From February 2011 to October 2011, there were 1,345 different ways in which people got to www.waverley.gov.uk.

Top 30 referring websites were:

(Please see bottom of table for definitions.)

Count	Source/Medium	Visits	% Visits	Comments
1	**google / organic**	**245,260**	**57.78**	
2	**(direct) / (none)**	**77,861**	**18.34**	
3	waverley.gov.uk / referral	26,668	6.28	Link from one of our webpages
4	**bing / organic**	**11,868**	**2.80**	
5	**yahoo / organic**	**7,261**	**1.71**	
6	plandocs.waverley.gov.uk / referral	4,722	1.11	Link from Planning documents website

7	search / organic	3,850	0.91	
8	local.direct.gov.uk / referral	3,363	0.79	
9	aol / organic	3,351	0.79	
10	search.bt.com / referral	2,791	0.66	
11	farnham.gov.uk / referral	2,752	0.65	
12	waverweb.waverley.gov.uk / referral	2,732	0.64	
13	surreycc.gov.uk / referral	2,665	0.63	
14	ask / organic	2,108	0.50	
15	waverley.searchimprove.com / referral	2,018	0.48	Link from Waverley's search results
16	google.co.uk / referral	1,559	0.37	
17	godalming-tc.gov.uk / referral	811	0.19	
18	talktalk.co.uk / referral	696	0.16	
19	direct.gov.uk / referral	657	0.15	
20	sailfrensham.org.uk / referral	626	0.15	
21	visitsurrey.com / referral	587	0.14	
22	search.sky.com / referral	567	0.13	
23	secretts.co.uk / referral	552	0.13	
24	gertrudejekyll.co.uk / referral	550	0.13	
25	connect / referral	530	0.12	
26	wordex.uk.com / referral	501	0.12	
27	consult.waverley.gov.uk / referral	494	0.12	
28	planningportal.gov.uk / referral	468	0.11	
29	facebook.com / referral	439	0.10	
30	dcleisurecentres.co.uk / referral	426	0.10	

What is a 'referral' ?
A referral occurs when a user clicks on a hyperlink that takes him/her to a new page or file in any website. The originating site is the referrer.

When a user arrives at our site, referral information is captured, which includes the referrer website address, if available.

What is 'organic'?
Organic in this sense means that a user found the web link they were looking for by searching for it in a search engine.