

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 27 MARCH 2012

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**Title:**

**WEBSITE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Stefan Reynolds]

[Wards Affected: All]

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**Summary and purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to seek Executive approval for the website strategy and action plan.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

**Value for money** – investing time and effort into improving the website will encourage residents and other target audiences to use it as the first port-of-call for accessing council services. It is a lot cheaper for Waverley if customers find information or order a service online, rather than calling us or seeing us in person. It also means they can interact with us at a time that suits them.

**Leisure and lives** – the website can already be used for promoting our leisure centres, playgrounds, parks and countryside areas and activities which promote health and well-being for all. However, we need to dedicate resource to improving this area of the website.

**Understanding our residents' needs** –promoting and encouraging online feedback on consultations online is an easy and cost-effective way to get feedback and involve the majority of residents.

**Environment** – our online offering can support the promotion of this priority.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

Delivering the web strategy should ensure our website is easier to use for everyone. The main website conforms to Level Double-A Conformance to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0.

**Environment and Climate Change Implications:**

Using the website more efficiently (eg setting up online forms) will help to limit the use of paper.

## Resource/Value for Money Implications:

To achieve ongoing savings in the longer term, we need to invest in people and processes.

The website strategy proposes:

- Integrating suitable front end web services with backend systems
- Making cheaper methods of communication with customers more effective
- Part centralising the management of website content to improve quality and make processes more efficient. We aim to recruit a full time website and social media assistant to support the delivery of the website strategy. This is a post agreed through the star chamber and will be part-funded through an existing vacancy within the Communications team.

## Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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## Introduction

1. The current version of the Waverley website was launched in January 2011. The website is hosted internally and supported by Waverley's IT service.
2. The public increasingly use new technology to find information and interact with councils online. Statistics show an increase in the number of visits to our website and a change in how the website is accessed.

For example:

- The homepage received 44,016 in February 2012, compared to 31,831 in February 2011. This represents a **38% increase in visits** in a year.
  - In February 2012, 5,617 of visits to our website came via a mobile device, compared to 1,534 in February 2011. This represents a **266% increase in visits from mobile devices**.
3. 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.
  4. The website is managed by the Communications team within the Organisational Development service. Representatives from all services have responsibility for updating their sections of the website (currently 79 'editors'), and any changes they make are approved by the Communications team before they go live on the website.

## **Background to the website strategy**

5. A special website Star Chamber was held in November 2011 to discuss the future direction of the website, and it was agreed that a website strategy should be developed. The draft website strategy is attached at Annexe 1. It is based on data gathered about customer behaviour on our website (the 'top tasks' our customers are visiting), national research and best practice.
6. 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 the cost-effectiveness of supplying Council information and services.
7. The draft website strategy also sets out five steps needed to achieve this vision:
  - Gather useful information
  - Invest in efficient processes
  - Customer focus
  - Explore innovative new technologies
  - Benchmark website and monitor progress
8. A draft action plan to support the strategy for 2012/13 is attached at Annexe 2. A key feature of the work going forward will be input from customers. A recent Citizens' Panel survey included questions relating to use of the website. Further usability testing will be carried out with residents to ensure the website meets customer needs and to identify improvements.

## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

9. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this report at its meeting on 19 March 2012 and any observations will be circulated separately (to follow).

## **Recommendation**

The Executive is asked to endorse the website strategy and action plan.

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## **Background Papers (CEx)**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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