TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

18 September 2019

Report of the Director of Finance and Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Council Decision

1 REVIEW AND REPLACEMENT OF COUNCIL WEBSITE

A report updating Members on the progress in developing a website specification in liaison with the Member Working group.

Members are asked to approve a capital plan evaluation and add the Scheme to the Capital Plan to enable a new CMS to be procured.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's current website was introduced in April 2015 and has 1,376 standard web pages maintained across the organisation by 91 people from different Service areas.

1.1.2 At the last meeting of the Advisory Board in July 2019, Members were updated on the work that has been taking place to redesign the Council's website. This is a cross-service piece of work involving all Services within the Council and is being carried out with the full support of the Management Team.

1.1.3 As advised, the website review has to be approached in two parts: firstly from the "business/service" angle, and secondly from the IT design end.

1.2 Progress of the Website Specification

1.2.1 The Head of Service for Licensing, Community Service and Customer Service has been leading a group of Service Managers in formulating the specification document for the new website.

1.2.2 The Service Managers have been meeting as two separate groups. One has been focusing on the "Transaction" based content of the website, and the other "Commercial/News/ Event" content.

1.2.3 The specification of the new website has taken place over the last few months and has focused on what the "user/customer need" is for the new website. This has been cross-referenced with the work undertaken across the different Service

areas, which has challenged the mind-set and thinking of the Service areas against the strategically important customer need.

1.2.4 The proposed new website will house “Commercial focus” service activities, primarily supporting legislative and statutory requirements, together with webpages that support “Commercial Events” (showing *What is on? What to do?)* and featuring relevant “News”.

Personalisation

1.2.5 The market for the TMBC website has different type of distinctive users, “*Resident”, “Business*” and “*Visitor*”. Each of these type of user has their own needs and it is inherent in the design that “*Personalisation*” features predominately when a user signs in.

1.2.6 Members will no doubt agree that website content needs to be personal, usable, relevant and easily accessible to the user.

1.2.7 As a user, when you sign on to a banking app or Utility company to view your account, you only want to see content that is relevant to you, or if services and products are being shown to you, they need to be of relevance and could be of interest to you.

1.2.8 For example, as a person who lives in a flat on the third story of a building with no garden, if you sign on to the new website you do not want to see the Council trying to sell you a Garden Waste bin. However, you may want to know about council tax, parking permits, nearby leisure facilities and activities taking place locally etc.

1.2.9 Likewise if you are a business user of the website you will want to understand business rates, networking evets, funding launches, skill fairs and parking permits etc.

1.2.10 The key to a new website is to ensure we service the three different types of users i.e. *the Resident, Business and the Visitor* to the Borough.

Website development objectives

1.2.11 Our aim through channel shift, is to move interactions with TMBC from letter, email and phone calls to a seamless intuitive online interaction. This should result in reduced customer visits to council offices and allowing officer time to be focused in different ways.

1.2.12 In summary, we want to:

- Enable high user satisfaction with customers’ website journey in optimising the minimum number of clicks to find the required information;
- Ensure content is accurate, appropriate, current and relevant;

- Enable the customer (whether resident or business) to sign on through “My Account” to benefit from all their financial and appropriate Service area needs immediately assessable in one place;

- Hold a “Golden Record” of a customer’s details available to all Service areas to populate records, forms and requests, without rekeying duplicate information;

- Enable web pages to be created with the ability to be “live” for a set period of time and be automatically reviewed by alerts being generated when reaching the expiry or review date;

- Enable directories for businesses (e.g. restaurants and leisure activities) to be automatically maintained, using alerts ensuring up-to-date information is shown and with alerts being generated when reaching the expiry or review date.

- Show alerts and news feeds on web, with links to social media to show any disruptions to service delivery (e.g. bin collections, inclement weather etc.); *and*

- Build a suite of analytical data visible through a dashboard to show performance of the website. This will include exception reporting where the web team and Service Managers can track the live pages.

1.2.13 Continual management of website content is a key issue and Management Team are currently considering how this can be achieved going forward within the corporate establishment.

1.2.14 As outlined in paragraph 1.1.1, currently responsibility for content management is devolved across the Council as we do not have dedicated resources allocated to this function in our staff establishment. Unfortunately however, this can often mean that time dedicated to content management is squeezed when work pressure is high and resources are stretched. If we want to deliver the objectives set out above, it will be imperative to ensure that we do provide adequate focus and resources for this important function going forward. Management Team are currently in the process of considering how this can be managed.

Member working group

1.2.15 A Member Working group was set up to assist in the review and specification. The group consists of :

- Cllr Martin Coffin (Chair)

- Cllr Matt Boughton

- Cllr Robin Betts

- Cllr Georgina Thomas
- Cllr Mrs Anita Oakley

1.2.16 The group met on 7 August and considered, amongst other things:

1) What they like or dislike about the current TMBC website
2) Who are the “users of the website”?
3) Understanding the “customer need” and “personalisation”

1.2.17 Some useful insights and thoughts were forthcoming which have been built into the specification.

1.2.18 Details of the website specification drawn up by the Head of Service for Licensing, Community Service and Customer Service was shared with the Member working group on 4 September. The final specification has enabled the Head of IT to prepare the technical specification (see paragraph 1.3).

Engaging with the External Customer

1.2.19 A number of customer engagement surveys have been send out by the Head of Service for Licensing, Community Service and Customer Service to capture current thinking of the TMBC website and to capture what customers would like to see on a redesigned website. The following surveys are in the process of being completed:

- Survey completed at Customer Service at Tonbridge Castle
- Survey completed at Customer Service at Kings Hill
- Survey completed at Customer Surgeries at Larkfield
- Survey completed at Customer Surgeries at Snodland
- Survey completed by the Businesses community within the Borough
- Survey completed by Members and TMBC staff
- General Website survey (This survey for people visiting the TMBC website cannot start until the annual voter registration period ends in late September 2019).

1.2.20 The feedback has been very good in respect to people engaging honestly on their views, with over 70 members of the public and businesses agreeing for TMBC to follow up with them.

1.2.21 It is planned to have an “update of website development” on the staff intranet site to ensure staff can see process and actions from their input. Likewise it is proposed to have a blog where we can update members of the public and businesses.

1.2.22 Initial findings for each of the surveys (as at 31 August) is appended at **[Annex 1]** for Members’ information. Information continues to be gathered from customers and will be used to fine-tune the content and layout as appropriate.

1.2.23 The Head of Service for Licensing, Community Service and Customer Service is not able to attend the meeting of the Advisory Board on 18 September. Therefore if Members have any detailed questions they would like to raise in respect of the specification or the process that has been followed, please contact the Head of Service, Anthony Garnett, in advance of the meeting on extension 6151 or by e-mail at anthony.garnett@tmbc.gov.uk

1.3 Technical (IT) Specification

1.3.1 In a nutshell, the objective is to replace the Council’s current Content Management System (CMS) with the objective of improving customer experience, and allowing customers to access all Council services via a secure unified customer portal with single sign-on. Integration with core back office systems is required.

1.3.2 Members will note that this is not a ‘like for like’ replacement of our current website. The anticipated running costs are anticipated to be in excess of those we currently budget for, but to achieve the improvements we all seek, this is an inevitable consequence. Of course, if we can facilitate the channel shift as we hope we can, this will enable us to focus our scarce resources more efficiently.

1.3.3 A Capital Plan Evaluation document has been produced and attached at **[Annex 2]**.

1.3.4 A prudent budget for the capital cost of the replacement, including any consultancy, design and implementation is recommended as £140,000. However, we will be seeking the most cost efficient solution via a procurement process so we hope the cost will be well within this budget allocation. Ongoing annual revenue implications are anticipated to be in the order of £31,000 for the specification required. Members should note that we currently have existing running costs of £4,000 for the existing website, so these can be netted off future running costs.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 Once approval to proceed has been given, procurement will be done in accordance with EU procurement regulations where appropriate, and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The final capital costs (including design, implementation and consultancy) after the procurement exercise can be funded from the Transformation Reserve.

1.5.2 Revenue costs will need to be built into base budget through the preparation of Estimates.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 The risk of not moving forward with a replacement for the website within the context of the digital agenda is that the Council may not be providing services in the ways that our residents wish

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users

1.8 Policy Considerations

- Customer Contact
- Communications
- Community
- Procurement

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 Members are requested to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet (and thereafter Full Council) that:

1) progress with the review and replacement of the website is noted;

2) the scheme be added to List A funded in full from the Transformation Reserve; and

3) the net increase in revenue costs be incorporated into the forthcoming Estimates process.

Background papers:

- Internal document shared with Member working group – website specification for TMBC (work in progress)
- Technical specification for CMS prepared by Head of IT

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