CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 FEBRUARY 2022

QUESTIONS (AND RESPONSES) REGARDING THE COUNCIL'S NEW WEBSITE:

1. **Will the Council's web site address (www.iwight.gov.uk) be used on all council communications and advertisements including signage and council vehicles?**

   Any future communications or design work will reference the website www.iow.gov.uk which is the current website address. The old website address was by necessity changed to this one in response to central government direction. However, there remains a link for anyone entering the old address to be redirected automatically.

2. **Can the Council's public access computer sites, e.g. libraries, be configured to ensure defaults to the Council's website homepage? This would raise awareness of the website and encourage greater usage.**

   The public computers located in our local libraries have a direct link to the libraries and heritage section of www.iow.gov.uk to promote the types of information and services that people are likely access when visiting their local library. There are and will continue to be easy locatable links that enables other parts of the website to be accessed during their visit.

3. **Any staff who produces information to be placed on the website should ensure the use of plain English/ writing for the website to ensure that a consistent standard in writing is maintained throughout the website.**

   We have a digital content standard that is in line with digital accessibility guidance for readability and a Plain English guide that all content is being aligned to. There are e-learning modules available for all staff to develop their writing skills in accordance with this standard. There are also website digital content managers within our communications team who can also provide guidance and support and manage the final content for publication in line with the above standards.

4. **The Council should look at ways in which the website might be made more appealing to particular groups of people. It is suggested to encourage visits by young people and new users the website needs to have a 'fun' element. Development of interactive tours and games should also encourage visitors to stay on the site for longer and come back to the site. For example, a virtual tour of Dinosaur Isle, Records Office, Fort Victoria Country Park or other key sites operated by the Council.**

   A key feature of our new website will be for it to have an improved transactional focus so that users can efficiently access the service they require, and which has content and transactions designed around the customer, so that they can achieve what they need to do quickly. The website platform will therefore have much less content than previously but will have provision for videos and other types of content media that can be utilised for the purposes of engaging with customers. The content of the website will continue to be reviewed and designed in line with user needs gained from stakeholder feedback and through ongoing engagement with service representatives and service user groups once the BETA site has been launched.

5. **It is suggested a section should be developed on 'Are you new to the Isle of Wight' which should include maps and directions to key services such as local schools, hospital, doctors, benefit office and other services which a person who has just recently moved into the area will find useful. The website should aim to be the portal for the Island.**

    The priority for the newly developed website will be secure the transfer from the existing site of all the current service content and essential information required by our residents and customers as it has been reviewed and refreshed to meet our design principles. Once that is complete, further improvements, such as these that have been identified as being of benefit will be considered on a busines case basis for the allocation of resources. This is unlikely to happen before March 2023 however, due to the timetable of existing programmed work.

6. **How will the search engine be adapted? Will this be so that the most important information is listed first?**

    We shall be providing an improved search functionality for the BETA website go live which will aim to provide a better experience in locating the most frequently used information that our residents and customers wish to locate and will use natural language. During the next phase of the website project, this search feature will be further enhanced to include search results for things such as top tasks, articles, relevant documents, previous search and recently added material relevant to the search request.

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7. **Has consideration been given to establishing a youth 'page' on the council website specifically aimed at young people, to include a 'fun' element and educational content on what the council does?**

    The youth council already has a dedicated area on the council's website which will be reviewed in the next phase of the website project. There has already been engagement with the youth council during the design and delivery phase of the website and we will endeavour to continue that engagement with these younger representatives as the website progresses.

8. **In relation to the link to council consultations will this be improved so that the outcomes of consultations are shown as promptly as possible the actions are being taken as the result of these?**

    As mentioned above, the priority for the newly developed website will be secure the transfer from the existing site of all the current service content and essential information required by our residents and customers as it has been reviewed and refreshed to meet our design principles. Once that is complete, further improvements, such as these that have been identified as being of benefit will be considered on a busines case basis for the allocation of resources. This will however be linked to the considerations for the development and adoption of an engagement strategy for the council.

9. **It is possible to investigate the inclusion of an online 'quick vote' system to enable the council to consult residents on simple policy and service related matters? A 'quick vote' system would allow people to vote for their favoured approach from a defined list of alternatives and provide a snapshot view (not a definitive view) of residents on key areas of council policy and service.**

As above in point 8, this will be linked to the considerations for the development and adoption of an engagement strategy for the council and will also link with the ambitions of the council's refreshed digital strategy being put forward for consideration by Cabinet in March 2022.

10. **Will there be an ongoing online feedback system to continually review the content and structure of the website to identify areas for improvements? This could regularly test the attraction of the website and to target a high volume of use by local residents and ensure that the contents remain relevant to local residents needs.**

The new website is being launched as a BETA site to allow for continuous feedback to be sought from those who use it. Further feedback and engagement with stakeholders, representative groups and internal services will continue throughout the future development of the website.

11. **Will the website meet all the requirements placed upon public sector bodies and how will this be tested?**

The council is a signatory to the government's local digital declaration in which we commit to:
- design services that best meet the needs of citizens
- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

All aspects of the new website are also being developed in accordance with the guidelines set by the government digital service together with best practice that has been researched across the sector. There is a technical test which will be sourced to ascertain assurance of requirements.

The requirements of the public sector bodies (websites and mobile applications) (No2) accessibility regulations 2018 are also at the heart of the design and delivery of the new website.

Our user feedback will help us to ascertain whether we are fully meeting these national standards of practice and the government digital service (GDS) monitor public websites and apps on their accessibility and compliance.