

Performance and Contract Management Committee

15 November 2016

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Title | Web improvement update |
| Report of | Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes |
| Wards | All |
| Status | Public |
| Urgent | No |
| Key | No |
| Enclosures | Appendix A - GovMetric top 10 councils for website satisfaction in September 2016 |
| Officer Contact Details | Kari Manovitch, Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes, kari.manovitch@barnet.gov.uk Andy Ralphs, Head of Customer Services, Capita Local Government, andy.ralphs@capita.co.uk Chris Melia, Customer Experience Manager, Capita Local Government, Christopher.Melia@capita.co.uk |

Summary

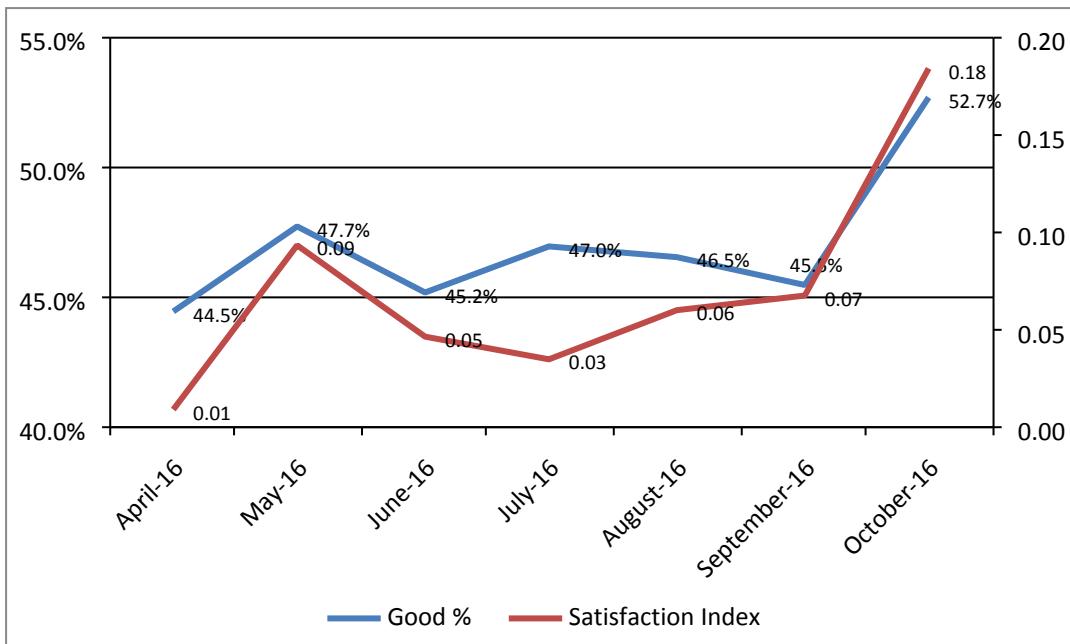
It is a priority for the council to have a website that attracts customers and provides a good customer experience. The council monitors its success in a number of ways, including through the satisfaction ratings that customers submit when using the site. A report was presented to the Performance and Contact Management Committee on the 31st May 2016 which highlighted a number of actions to be taken to improve the customer experience. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on those actions and how this has impacted upon performance.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee notes the progress being made and endorses the continuation of work required to continuously improve the website.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Since the last report dated the 31st May 2016, good progress has been made to implement the actions as detailed in the report.
- 1.2 The council monitors the success of the website through a range of measures, and customer satisfaction ratings are central. In the first three quarters of 2015/16, website satisfaction remained below expectation. This led to the establishment of strengthened monitoring, a cross-council action group, an action plan, and reporting the progress on the plan to this committee.
- 1.3 Implementing this action plan continues to have positive results. From a baseline of 38% in August 2015 it has improved to 52% in October.
- 1.4 However, the council knows that to realise its vision, we need to see higher levels of web usage, and this will only be achieved if satisfaction levels rise, as a result of further improvements to the website. The current agreement with the Council includes an expectation to achieve a target of 51% of good ratings by end of Q4 2016/17 and to be amongst the top 10 councils for customer satisfaction of its website by 2020.
- 1.5 The chart below shows GovMetric Web Satisfaction performance since April 2016. There has been an improvement from April to October, the biggest movement has been the increase of 7.2% in October. We believe the large rise of satisfaction in October is related to less IT issues, improved service delivery in waste and recycling, incremental changes to the website and the recent changes to the survey. We will need to track these improvements over the next quarter. The blue line in the graph relates to the left axis, which is how the council reports the satisfaction scores; the proportion of scores that are good. The red line relates to the right axis, which shows Barnet's score according to GovMetric indexing methodology, which is used to rank all subscribing councils. on this measure, 1 is the highest score, -1 is the lowest score, and Barnet's highest score was nearly 0.18 in October.

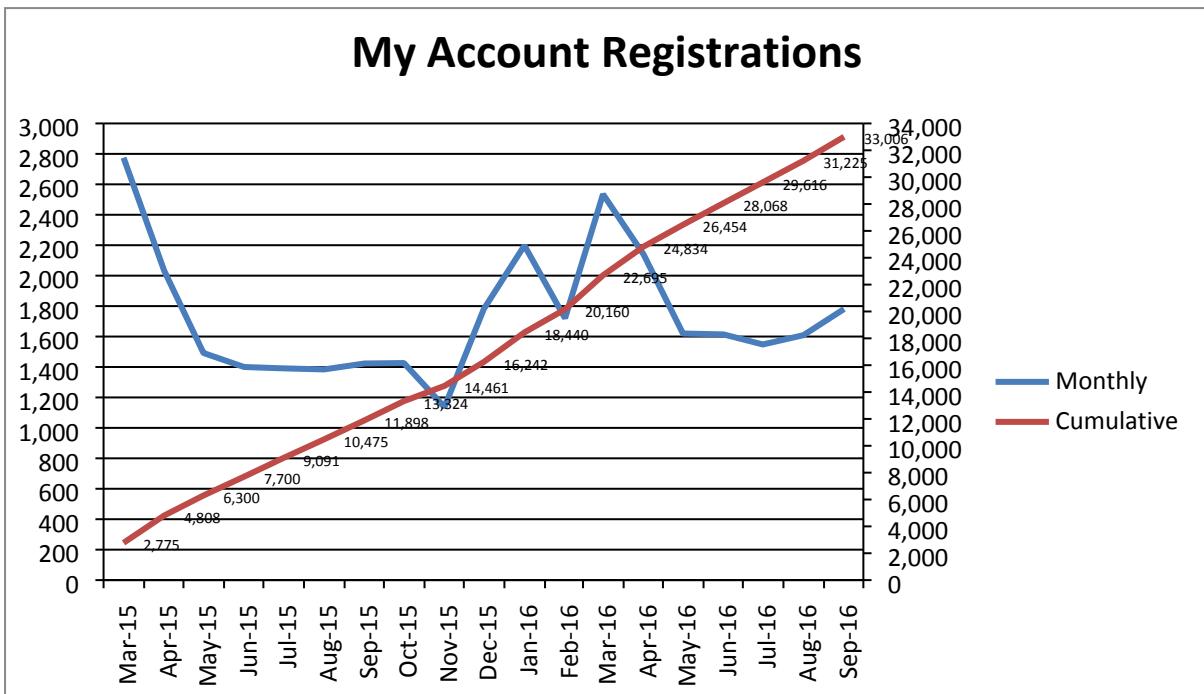


- 1.6 Customer Experience Team have delivered 16 web forms (including improvements to 13 existing forms and development of 3 new forms) enabling residents to carry out 2,600 online transactions for the period July – September 2016. A summary table below shows the work delivered by the Customer Experience Team over the last 5 months.

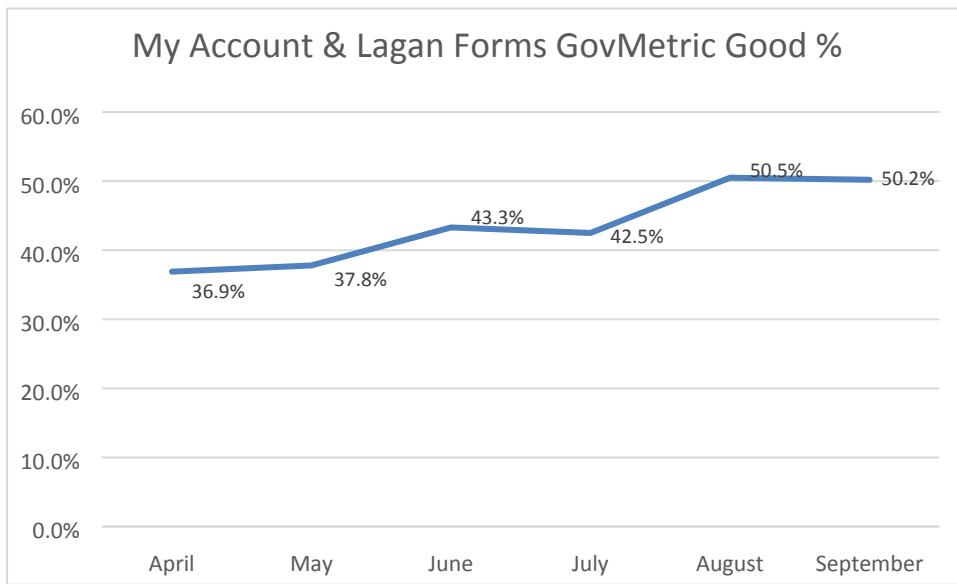
| Form Description | Month Delivered | Type of Request (New or Changes to Existing) |
|--|-----------------|--|
| Land Charges personal search and land charges Form | June | Changes to existing |
| Full events in Parks e-form | June | Changes to existing |
| Care Package Review Web-form | July | Changes to existing |
| MASH referral form | July | Changes to existing |
| New online form request for Residents Forum | August | New form request |
| Keep Barnet Clean feedback form | August | New form request |
| eform update - library volunteer form | September | Changes to existing |

| | | |
|--|-----------|-------------------------|
| Request a library card | September | Changes to existing |
| Reserve an Item | September | Changes to existing |
| Reserve a book or library item | September | Changes to existing |
| Civic Awards Nomination form | September | New form request |
| Missed Bin Collection Form (changes) | October | Changes to existing |
| Web School Admission Form - Appeal Request In Year School Admission (year 3 - 11) | October | Changes to existing |
| Web School Admission Form - Appeal Request In Year School Admission to an infant class (reception to year 2) | October | Changes to existing |
| Council tax - moving in | October | Changes to existing |
| Council tax - moving out | October | Changes to existing |

- 1.7 My Account registrations have increased by 45% since the end of March 2016; by the end of September 2016 there were 33,006 accounts set up, representing 23% of households, after 18 months of the service being live. This reflects the effort made by CSG to promote the features & benefits of My Account in conversations with residents, marketing information with Council Tax bills and signposting customers to My Account after calling Contact Centre. The target for 2016 is to get to 20% households and has been exceeded therefore we are looking at reviewing these alongside the Customer Transformation Programme.
- 1.8 The graph below shows the volume of registrations over the last 18 months along with a cumulative trend.



- 1.9 There has been a noticeable increase in the GovMetric performance for My Account since April 2016. The graph below shows a 13% increase in performance from April to September. There has been great vigilance demonstrated by the Customer Experience Team in monitoring satisfaction levels on a daily basis and working closely with IT to ensure My Account & Lagan related web forms perform as they should, reporting form performance incidents and participating in regular testing activities with IT. The IT Applications team is continuing to work with the IT vendors who supply the systems and servers that support the website.



WORK COMPLETED SINCE LAST REPORT

- 1.10 This Web Leads group meets every 6 weeks and is responsible for implementing an action plan, and reporting progress on this to the council's delivery board and to this Committee.
- 1.11 Customer services monitor GovMetric feedback comments on a daily basis and identify areas of the web which need addressing these specifically, such as broken or incorrect links and carry out changes to content, and making recommendations to improve functionality where appropriate.
- 1.12 Regular sessions are now held between the Customer Experience Team and the Web Content Team to ensure there is alignment on priorities, sharing of best practice on style guides and sharing of ideas to improve the web.
- 1.13 The Customer Experience Team have undertaken further webform development training and further training requirements are being reviewed.
- 1.14 The council has established a Quarterly web performance review meeting which involves the Customer Experience Team, IT and the Web Content Team, an action plan to drive further improvements is documented.
- 1.15 Customer Services have successfully completed a trial by responding to "tweets" and is collaborating with the Social Media Team to deliver a social media channel across Barnet.
- 1.16 Every week senior managers receive a customer performance bulletin, and this contains web ratings and customer feedback, in order for improvements to take place.
- 1.17 The council has commissioned CSG to deliver a project to improve the Adult Social Care pages of the website, using an Agile approach, which is new to the council but very successfully used by the IT industry and by the Government's Digital Service. This project commenced in October and will conclude in December.

UPDATES ON ACTIONS AGREED

- 1.18 Over the last 6 months CSG and the Council have been working hard to improve the experience that customers have when visiting the website. The actions are detailed below with the relevant updates highlighted below
 - **Action: Improving My Account, and the most-used webforms:** Customer services will review feedback about My Account and these forms to create a clear set of improvement actions **by the end of June**. There is also an upgrade of the Civica system in 2016, used for Council

Tax and Housing Benefits, which will include improved online capability for these services.

- **Status:** As reported above, Customer satisfaction ratings for My Account continue to improve – there has been a 13% increase in performance over the last 6 months.

The table below shows the top 10 used forms (April 2016 to September 2016). There are a number of potential improvements to My Account that have been identified that we believe would improve customer satisfaction and take up, but investment in these now needs to be considered in the context of the plan to have a new My Account facility in place from summer 2017 as part of the Customer Transformation Programme. **Not closed**

| | Form name | Total |
|----|--|-------|
| 1 | Pay Council Tax | 4,974 |
| 2 | Council tax moving in | 4,048 |
| 3 | Report a problem | 3,469 |
| 4 | Council tax moving out | 3,234 |
| 5 | New damaged and additional bins | 2,828 |
| 6 | Report a non-collection* | 2,697 |
| 7 | Application for in year school admission | 2,235 |
| 8 | Council tax general enquiry | 1,646 |
| 9 | MASH referral form | 1,169 |
| 10 | Contact the council | 729 |

- **Action: Technical support and maintenance:** When technical issues arise with the website, they are not resolved as quickly as they should be. There is a list of technical improvements that have been identified, but as yet no clear timeline for implementing them. Therefore, the arrangements for technical support and maintenance of the website are in the process of being clarified and strengthened, which will conclude in July.

Status: Progress has been made and we now have a set of proposals that will deliver a number of improvements over the next 3 months, starting in early December. **In progress**.

- **Action: Proactive website management and maintenance:** The council currently has no tool in place to proactively alert it to web faults, which means that faults are discovered first by either customers or non-technical staff. There are tools available that do proactively and comprehensively monitor the performance of a website, enabling more rapid resolution of glitches, which CSG will evaluate. This will conclude in June.

Status: A web monitoring tool has been identified and the funding to enable implementation of the solution is being explored. **In progress**

- **Action: Involving customers:** Successful online services are designed with customers in mind throughout. Sites need to continually improve, to adapt to customer behaviours and preferences. The council needs to strengthen opportunities for obtaining customer experience feedback and is looking at various options for doing this. This will conclude in July.

Status: For continuous improvement of all services/channels by the Customer Experience team will use Co-design principles to inform and drive the service improvement plans, with ongoing measurement as to whether the website and digital services meet these principles. Additionally, customer feedback obtained via GovMetric will be central to ongoing improvements.

In addition to this the Customer Transformation Programme is prototyping a co-design approach to designing web improvements for the Adults Social Care webpages. Officers, service users and carers are being consulted over their expectations for the carer-facing elements of the Councils' website. The findings will inform how we use co-design as part of the programme moving forwards. **Ongoing**

- **Action: Broader benchmarking:** The council currently relies on GovMetric tool, which is used by around 70 other councils, to measure the quality of the website and understand what a realistic level of customer satisfaction is. However, customer feedback provided via GovMetric is not always about the website but rather, about the council. Customers sometimes use the survey to vent their frustration about council decision or a service experience. Therefore, the council is looking at additional ways of measuring the site. These include:
 - Neteasy - where pages are rated on a 5-star system
 - SOCITM (Society of IT managers for local government) benchmarking – this uses independent reviewers of pages based on criteria for access, readability, ease of use, content accuracy, end to end digital

Additionally, customer services will more closely review the councils that receive the highest GovMetric ratings to understand the extent to which the prominence/availability of the survey across the site is helping to boost their scores, thus making them less reliable comparators; see Appendix A. These actions will conclude in July.

Status: We have recently changed the online satisfaction survey to make it clearer and simpler for customers to explain their rating for the website. The changes mean that customers are now discouraged from commenting on service and policy issues, and encouraged to give feedback about the website only. This will give us better insight enabling us to target improvements on the web. This includes us collecting customer contact details so we can contact them directly for more detailed feedback when required. GovMetric has commended us on our approach and will be using our revised survey with new and existing customers. The need for additional insight will be kept under review. **Closed**

- **Action:** CSG Customer Services commissioned a peer review of the council's website by the online service expert team in West Sussex Council in April, which address content, navigation, search, and accessibility in detail. These findings need to be reviewed, with priority actions identified and assigned to officers. This process of action planning and prioritising will conclude in June.

Status: The recommendations have been assigned to the various parties required to address them. The council has commissioned a project to refresh the Adults section of the website, the work started on the 31st October 2016. The council has also initiated a Customer Transformation Programme, which will address web improvement from January 2017 onwards. **In progress.**

- **Action: Improving content:** All Delivery Units will be asked to agree targets for improving the ratings of the content that they are responsible for. Targets will be agreed by the end of June 2016 and will be monitored quarterly. Within this, a list of 20 areas that receive the most online complaints will be the focus of attention.

Status: CSG has committed to reach 51% web satisfaction by the end of the year and the Customer Experience Team has a renewed focus on addressing the causes of dissatisfaction, working closely with the corporate web team. However, Delivery Units have been reluctant to sign up to targets for the specific pages that they are responsible for, due to lack of a capacity to make improvements. This will be revisited as part of addressing the need for a stronger capacity to improve web content. **In progress.**

- **Action: Staff capacity** CSG has just recruited a dedicated Customer Experience Analyst to lead customer service's activity in understanding and improving the website, and working with the council's web managers and web lead group. The council also needs to evaluate how best it can maintain website content according to best practice principles, so that writing and maintaining good content becomes the norm, rather than something that happens periodically as part of a project. Only by delivering a consistently good customer experience will customers be persuaded to go to the website, stay on the website, and use it again in future. This will conclude in August.

Status: The Customer Transformation Programme business case approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 5 October 2016 included new funding for web improvement work, and set out the need to establish a centralised web content team instead of the devolved model that the council currently operates. The Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes will now take forward the proposal for creating a central web team. Additionally, via the 3-year review process, Customer Services has agreed to take on leadership for the IT staff and contracts responsible for maintaining the website, so that work in this area can be better aligned to customer services strategy. **In progress**

Action: **Implementing the Customer Access Strategy:** The strategy approved by Policy & Resources committee was subject to public consultation, and the results of this consultation will be reported to Policy & Resources Committee with a final version of the strategy. A business case for the investment required to implement this strategy will be brought to Policy & Resources Committee in October. This will set out the IT infrastructure required to ensure that customers received the sort of intuitive and efficient experience when dealing with council services as they have become accustomed to when dealing with online retailers.

Status: The Customer Transformation Programme business case was approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 5 October 2016, this is a two-year programme starting in early 2017. **In Progress**

- 1.19 **Action:** In addition to the above set of actions, the broader improvement plans for the IT service, and the management of systems and IT projects, will have a positive impact on the customer web experience. Problems experienced in relation to the new Parking system, and the Libraries system, detrimentally impacted on customer experience in quarter 4, both online and offline.

Status: Improvements have been made to the release management processes and a forward plan of enhancements and changes are being developed. We are working closely with our web support partner and this will strengthen our ability to deliver changes more effectively in the future.

Ongoing

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To allow scrutiny of the information provided and to allow discussion and feedback from the committee on the position reported.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The alternative option is not to focus on the website. However, this is inconsistent with the council's Customer Access Strategy, and the benefits to customers and taxpayers to be achieved through greater digital service delivery.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The web improvement work is ongoing and will align with the Customer Transformation Programme.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

- 5.1 **Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.1.1 Improving customer services, and delivering flexible and intuitive web-based services is a corporate priority established in the Corporate Plan.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.3 This improvement plan is being delivered in partnership with Capita, Costs to the council will be contained within existing budgets in Commissioning and also transformation reserve for implementing the customer access strategy There will be no additional financial impact on the council as a result of the improvements identified in the report

5.4 Social Value

5.4.1 Not applicable.

5.5 Legal and Constitutional References

5.5.1 The [Council's Constitution, in Part 15 Annex A, Responsibility for Functions, states](#) the functions of the Performance and Contract Management Committee include (amongst other responsibilities):

- a) Overall responsibility for quarterly budget monitoring, including monitoring trading position and financial strategy of Council Delivery Units.
- b) Monitoring of Performance against targets by Delivery Units and Support Groups including Customer Support Group; Re: The Barnet Group (Including Barnet Homes and Your Choice Barnet); HB Public Law; NSL (Parking Contractor); Adults and Communities; Family Services; Education and Skills; Street Scene; Public Health; Commissioning Group; ad Assurance.
- c) Receive and Scrutinise contract variations and change requests in respect of external delivery units.
- d) To make recommendations to Policy and Resources and Theme Committees on relevant policy and commissioning implications arising from the scrutiny of performance of Delivery Units and External Providers.
- e) Specific responsibility for the following function within the Council:
 - a. Risk Management
 - b. Treasury Management Performance
- f) Note the Annual Report of the Barnet Group Ltd

5.6 Risk Management

5.6.1 The web improvements and updates provided are to mitigate the risk to the council's reputation and achievement of the customer access vision and strategy that arise low customer satisfaction with the council's website.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity

5.7.1 It is vital that web improvement work takes into account the diversity of

customer requirements, such as differential accessibility needs, and maintains the AA accessibility rating.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Web improvement work is and must continue to be informed by the customer feedback obtained through various feedback mechanisms, including Customer Satisfaction surveys, verbal feedback and any other communication channels.

5.8 Insight

- 5.8.1 The council's promotion of the website is informed by understanding how digitally able our customers are, and tailoring our approach accordingly. Some customers who are not digitally able will not be expected to use digital channels and will be given more personal support.

6 Background Papers

- 6.1 Performance and Contract Management Committee, CSG Web improvement update:
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=693&MId=8412&Ver=4>