



Financial Performance and Contracts Committee

11 March 2019

Title	Improving Customer Services – Website progress report
Report of	Commercial Director
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	None
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Summary

Following a report to the Financial Performance and Contracts Committee on 9 October 2018, this report provides an update on progress made in improving the council's website. The council successfully launched a new website on 19 February 2019.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the committee note the actions being taken by officers to improve web satisfaction and performance and the progress made to improve the council's website.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following a report to committee on 9 October 2018 an update on progress of the new website was requested at a future meeting.
- 1.2 The new website was successfully launched on 19 February 2019 and to date feedback has been positive. Some minor teething issues were reported in the first few days, as some of the old pages did not re-direct to the new website correctly but these were all resolved by the end of the first week.
- 1.3 Since the previous committee report activity has taken place in the following areas:
 - Many hours of testing with residents, staff and technical partners ensuring there was minimal disruption as the new website went live. Resident involvement in the design and testing is intended to improve website satisfaction in the future
 - New online forms were introduced for school admission enquiries, reporting safeguarding concerns for children and the ability to express an interest in adoption was added.
- 1.4 This report provides more detail on the improvements made to the website and importantly outlines how residents were involved in the testing and design of the new site to ensure it better meets their needs. The report also details the additional technical assurance and testing that was carried out to ensure disruption to the public was minimised.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS

- 1.5 The percentage of customers who have rated the website as 'good' over the previous three quarters is set out in the table below.

Description	Q1 18/19 (Apr-Jun 18)	Q2 18/19 (Jul-Sept 18)	Q3 18/19 (Oct-Dec18)
Customer Satisfaction (% customers who rate website as good - GovMetric)	32%	33%	30%
Target Customer Satisfaction	55%	55%	55%
Web sessions	845,180	809,429	874,076

- 1.6 Improvements to the new website include:

- Easier and quicker access for customers to complete top tasks and access key information
- Improved and simplified content making the site more relevant to those who use it
- A homepage that can be more easily changed (i.e. prominently featuring news items the council wishes to communicate)
- Improved navigation and search functionality making it easier to find the information people need

- Improving the scalability, resilience and security of the new site by moving to an industry leading modern cloud hosted solution (award-winning Amazon Web Services)
- The Amazon solution offers increased scale to better meet peak traffic with additional server capacity which should increase stability and speed of the site.

1.7 Summary of resident engagement and wider testing:

- The new website has been co-designed with residents and staff across all demographics with over 250 hours of resident focus groups and 300 hours of staff workshops
- Residents were engaged from the start of the process to inform the design of the new website ensuring Barnet's digital offer reflects their needs
- The content on the website was also designed with residents to avoid jargon and ensure it is meaningful to them and the new icons and homepage layout tested with residents to make sure the site is easier to use and navigate
- Staff undertook over 1,000 hours of testing on key web pages and interactions to ensure the functionality works as it should
- Over 600 technical and functional elements were tested and the mobile first design was fully tested across multiple devices and browsers
- The new website passed rigorous technical testing with an independent assurance provider, testing security of the new website against both internal and external threats (i.e. hackers) and multiple performance tests were carried out to ensure capacity and resilience of the site is prepared for future increased usage
- AA Accessibility testing (screen readers, visual aids) was complete across all major platforms and devices.

1.8 The council is aware digital is not for all, albeit this is an increasingly smaller proportion of the population. It is important safeguards are in place to ensure nobody is left behind by the digital changes and the council supports those that need additional help. A programme of activity is being designed to implement the council's Digital Inclusion Strategy to reduce the proportion of residents who are digitally excluded and ensure that those that are digitally excluded still have effective, cost efficient ways of accessing council services. Residents' feedback has highlighted lack of skills, equipment or access costs being too high (telephone/broadband subscription) as barriers to engaging online.

1.9 To address these, the council has put in place the following initiatives and continues to engage with residents to understand where to prioritise resources in a meaningful way.

- Various IT training / support initiatives that aim to upskill residents who wish to learn basic IT skills
- Initiatives that provide free Wi-Fi and free (limited) use of computers for those who may have limited access otherwise (e.g. libraries, town centres, sheltered housing)
- Customer Advocacy Service (CAS¹) for customers who are unable to use the internet and need additional help to access council services.

1.10 The next steps will be:

¹ This is a small dedicated team based at the Contact Centre that assists customers who require additional support.

- Continued open feedback channels to ensure quick remedy and resolution of any issues raised
- Continual monitoring of the new site through web performance dashboards and internal digital champions network
- Further resident engagement to iteratively improve the website and ensure momentum is not lost following the recent changes
- By the end of March address the remaining legacy online forms, that need to be re-designed for the new site (c.70% of existing forms re-designed to date)
- Introduce automated online forms for high volume Council Tax transactions
- In April 2019, new functionality should be launched to enable residents to book and pay for library rooms, events, and sports pitches and book online appointments for registration services e.g. registering a birth. Residents will, thereafter, also be able to follow an existing report and receive proactive notifications on issues reported.

Update on ICT incident resolution

1.11 Following a reported decline in performance last quarter there has been an improvement in the performance of the indicator that measures internal IT incident resolution within SLA in Q3 (95.7% against target of 95%). This has been due to a changeover of management within the IT Service and additional resources to focus on meeting agreed timescales by the IT Service. The target for this KPI was increased in September 2018 from 91% to 95%.

Update on external customer satisfaction (telephony, email and face-to-face visits)

1.12 Further context on how the Customer Satisfaction KPI is calculated was requested, the below table shows a summary of the performance over the last three quarters.

Description	Q1 18/19 (Apr-Jun 18) Result	Q2 18/19 (Jul-Sept 18) Result	Q3 18/19 (Oct-Dec18) Result
Customer Satisfaction (excluding website)	90%	89%	90%
Target Customer Satisfaction	89%	89%	89%
Total surveys completed	30,187	27,134	23,379

1.13 This metric shows, as a % of total customer feedback, those that rate the service they receive as good, of all feedback received via telephony, email and face-to-face visits combined.

1.14 The opportunity to rate the service and provide feedback is offered to residents on calls that are handled in the contact centre. Residents are offered the opportunity to be transferred to a survey and are only transferred if they consent. The offer of the survey is monitored via performance management and quality control. On average for this year, 23% of customers have opted to leave a rating. The feedback is captured via a tool called Govmetric, which is used across local authorities to measure customer satisfaction.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The report provides an update on the progress made in improving the council's website and digital offer. The committee is asked to note the actions being taken by officers to improve web satisfaction and performance and the progress made to improve the council's website.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 None.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The council will continue to ensure the improvements highlighted in this report are monitored and will track both the customer and financial benefits enabled by these changes.
- 4.2 The pace of change in digital developments will require a continual focus to ensure the council's website continues to improve, meets resident's expectations and has the flexibility to enable the overall ambition and priorities of the council. A focus on co-designing changes with residents and businesses to ensure the website works for them in the future will continue to be a key priority and focus.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 Barnet's vision in the Corporate Plan is to have re-designed local services that are integrated, intuitive and efficient, making life simpler for residents and customers. The Customer Transformation Programme enables this priority and is enabling contribution to the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 5.1.2 Customer satisfaction in the website is a corporate indicator and the Financial Performance and Contracts Committee's role in scrutinising the performance of this supports the objectives of achieving value for money and quality services.

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

- 5.2.1 The improvements outlined in this report will enable savings contributing to wider MTFS delivery for the council.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders. The council's contract management framework oversees that contracts deliver the expected services to the expected quality for the agreed cost. Requirements for a contractor to deliver activities in line with Social Value will be monitored through this contract management process.

5.3.2 Improvements outlined in this report will ensure that more information and services are available online so that customers can access them at a time of their choosing, and that barriers preventing customers accessing online channels are addressed through a Digital Inclusion Strategy.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 The council's Constitution, Article 7 Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships, sets out the functions of the Financial Performance and Contracts Committee as being Responsible for the oversight and scrutiny of:

- The overall financial performance of the council
- The performance of services other than those which are the responsibility of the: Adults & Safeguarding Committee; Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee; Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee; Community Leadership & Libraries Committee; Environment Committee; or Housing Committee
- The council's major strategic contracts including (but not limited to):
 - Analysis of performance
 - Contract variations
 - Undertaking deep dives to review specific issues
 - Monitoring the trading position and financial stability of external providers
 - Making recommendations to the Policy & Resources Committee and/or theme committees on issues arising from the scrutiny of external providers
- At the request of the Policy and Resources Committee and/or theme committees consider matters relating to contract or supplier performance and other issues and making recommendations to the referring committee
- To consider any decisions of the West London Economic Prosperity Board which have been called in, in accordance with this Article.

5.4.2 The content of this report is in line with these Constitutional responsibilities.

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 The council's Risk Management Framework is used to identify and respond to risks across all the council's services and is used in delivery of the Customer Transformation Programme. An external audit on the Customer Transformation Programme recently closed and a Substantial assurance rating was given in this regard.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires organisations exercising public functions to demonstrate that due regard has been paid to equalities in:

- Elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advancement of equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
- Fostering of good relations between people from different groups.

5.6.2 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

- 5.6.3 In order to assist in meeting the duty the council will:
- Try to understand the diversity of our customers to improve our services.
 - Consider the impact of our decisions on different groups to ensure they are fair.
 - Mainstream equalities into business and financial planning and integrating equalities into everything we do.
 - Learn more about Barnet's diverse communities by engaging with them.
- 5.6.4 This is also what we expect of our partners.
- 5.6.5 The delivery of the improvements outlined and enabled by the Customer Transformation Programme have been considered in an Equalities Impact Assessment and Digital Inclusion Strategy implementation plan. There are potential equalities impacts and these are being monitored and addressed within the project as outlined in paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9 above.
- 5.6.6 It should also be noted that residents across a wide range of demographics and disabilities supported the design of the new site through testing and engagement forums.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

- 5.7.1 In line with Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. There are no implications for Corporate Parenting in relation to this report.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Obtaining customer feedback is part of the contract management process to inform service delivery, service development and service improvement. Engagement undertaken in the development of the new website has been outlined in this report, in section 1.7 above.

5.9 Insight

- 5.9.1 The report identifies the approach to ensuring customer insight, data and feedback from residents has been used in regard to the improvements made to the new website.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Improving Customer Services – website satisfaction, Financial Performance and Contracts Committee, 9 October 2018
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s48730/Customer%20Services.pdf>