

Website Review Group Findings

Report number:	OAS/WS/21/008	
Report to and date(s):	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 June 2021
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Chair of the Working Group	Councillor Stephen Frost Tel: 07710 436672 Email: Stephen.frost@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
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Decisions Plan: N/A

Wards impacted: All

Recommendation: It is recommended that members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Endorses the action plan developed by the Website Review Working Group (Appendix 2), to be implemented with support of the Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 In December 2020 Councillor Terry Clements approached the Chair of the committee and relevant officers about a review of the Council’s website and use of its online forms by the public.
- 1.2 Following discussion with officers, a suggestion form was prepared (Appendix 1) and it was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a small working group be convened to discuss the current website and identify any improvements to be reported to a future Overview and Scrutiny meeting.
- 1.3 The working group comprised four councillors, namely Councillors Chester Chung, Clements and Frost and elected Councillor Frost as Chair. The group met on three occasions to understand data on how the website was used, discuss their experience of using the website and agree an action plan. Between meetings, members of the group tested the website, including attempting to undertake the 10 most commonly used website functions and testing Find My Nearest. The last meeting was held on the Wednesday 12 May when the group considered the progress made on an action plan which was developed during meeting two (see Appendix 2).
- 1.4 As Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Customer Services and Transformation, Councillor Everitt attended the first and last meeting of the working group and has indicated he is supportive of the proposals put forward.
- 1.5 The website is well used and was revamped in 2019 to coincide with the creation of West Suffolk Council. This has seen an increase in users and page views, even before the pandemic. See below/ Table 1.

Table 1:

West Suffolk Website	Total page views	Unique page views	Users
1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019	1,885,626	1,376,232	338,965
1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020	2,489,233	1,922,739	495,350
1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	3,187,646	2,555,178	699,418

- 1.6 In the three years between 1 April 2018 and the 31 March 2021, the data shows an 86% increase in unique page views and a 106% increase in users. COVID-19 has meant more people are going online to access services. Time spent on pages has increased and bounce rates has reduced which usually means that people are finding the information or services they need.

- 1.7 Whilst website use has increased, there is no corresponding increase in complaints to Customer Services from the public about the website. However, officers recognised and welcomed the need to constantly find ways to improve and enhance the website and access to online services.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 There are 15 improvements identified as a result of the work of the review group and, subject to endorsement from the Committee, these are now with officers to progress. Some of the actions have already been completed or in progress.
- 2.2 Of particular note are the findings from the information prepared for the group's first meeting, highlighting the shift in customer behaviour over time, but accelerated as a result of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown (Appendix 3).

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 None. The review was carried out in line with the request agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Appendix 1.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 As agreed in the work programme suggestion form, the review was focused on feedback from members and their testing of the website. Therefore, no formal public consultation or engagement was undertaken as part of the review. There was recognition that capturing formal user feedback is something to consider in future and has been included as an improvement item on the action plan. However, as part of the normal process of iterative improvement, feedback from partners and members of the public (through Customer Services) is currently used.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 The main risk(s) associated with the action plan items are that if they are not addressed, the website will not see iterative improvement over time. This in turn will potentially adversely impact on user experience and become a reputational matter.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 Financial

None, with the exception of Councillor and Officer time

6.2 Legal Compliance

Website Accessibility was discussed, and Councillors were assured of the level of Accessibility compliance achieved by the Council which is very high. The Working Group also discussed privacy issues linked to the use of Personal Data and GDPR and were satisfied that there were no concerns.

6.3 Personal Data Processing

See above

6.4 Equalities

Equalities were considered by the group in the context of accessibility. As recommendations from the action plan are implemented officers will be mindful of whether an Equality Impact Assessment is required, although it is not considered required at this stage

6.5 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)

As part of the work, the Service Manager (Customer Services and Transformation) was able to ascertain that for key partners working alongside the Council, there is no significant operational concern with the way the website is currently working, or the support available in the contact centre if further support (digital assistance) is required. Please note this is not classed as formal feedback.

7. **Appendices referenced in this report**

7.1 Appendix 1 – original suggestion form submitted by Councillor Terry Clements and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7.2 Appendix 2 – Action Plan

7.3 Appendix 3 – Data pack and background information (prepared by officers ahead of the first working group meeting)