

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Date: 09 November 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Council's Website

Lead officer: Sean Cunniffe, Head of Customer Contact

Lead Member: Councillor Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance & Corp Services

Recommendations:

That the Commission note the contents of this report and proposes any further requirements for the review or recommendations moving forward.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This briefing paper is providing some analysis and feedback on the website as requested by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

2. BACKGROUND

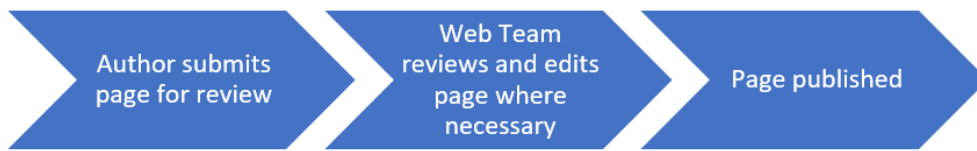
- 2.1 We currently have around 1500 pages on our main website www.merton.gov.uk. This is down from around 2300 in 2016. As part of the first phase of the Customer Contact Programme, redundant and unused pages were deleted, to make the site easier to navigate and manage. We constantly review customer feedback to identify gaps in content and add missing information where needed.
- 2.2 As part of the Customer Contact programme one of the key deliverables was a full refresh and migration of the Council's website to deliver a suite of on-line transactions and designed to ensure customers can easily access information and services across a myriad of devices.
- 2.3 The Strategy aimed at meeting the changing needs of our customers for access to services and, in particular, for services accessed on-line.
- 2.4 Our then partners engaged a design agency looking at best practice across all local authorities and central government, branding, and accessibility requirements. They also consulted internally with officers and service users.
- 2.5 We redesigned and automated a number of processes (over 100) with integration through the CRM system into partner systems.
- 2.6 In December 2018 the system was transferred to a new hosted environment and support arrangements. This proved less than ideal, and the entire system was transferred over to a new platform (as the previous one was no longer supported).

This significantly improved reliability issues with our external website that was often subject to downtime before the transfer.

- 2.7 Since then we have continued the development of processes and integrated commercial “apps” such as Fix My Streets through to relevant service areas to ensure customers are not disadvantaged by delays and can use the method of reporting that is most suitable to them.
- 2.8 The website continues to be a key communication aid. This has been particularly prevalent over the years and can be demonstrated by the response to the global pandemic, Britannia Point and Galpins Road incidents and more lately our response to the passing of The Queen.

3. Content governance and maintenance

- 3.1 The Web Team, consisting of 2 FTE, have overall governance of the website, acting as gatekeepers and content curators.
- 3.2 Pages that are updated frequently in a standard format (for example licensing registers, roadworks bulletin, Mayor’s calendar) are edited by staff in the relevant service area and sent to the Web Team for review before they are published.



- Other pages are edited by the Web Team directly.
- 3.3 Before publishing content, the Web Team edits it where necessary to ensure that it’s written in Plain English, follows Merton’s Style Guide, Government Digital Service content design guidelines, and the legally mandated “WCAG 2.1 AA” accessibility guidelines. These guidelines are very detailed, and content design is a skilled task, so this review stage is important.
- 3.4 Service managers are responsible for ensuring that the web pages about their services are kept up to date. When an update is required, they can update it directly if they have access to Drupal, or contact the Web Team to request an edit. The Web Team also undertakes regular pro-active reviews of content, working with services to identify redundant and out of date content. We aim to review every page on the website once a year.
- 3.5 The monthly accessibility index published by Socitm (Society of IT Managers) and Silktide (“Silktide Index”) currently rate our website as “Excellent” for accessibility. This is based on automated testing for a selection of the WCAG 2.1 guidelines.

3.6 There is a customer feedback option at the end of all web pages and e-forms. The Web Team review all feedback monthly and use this to drive improvement as demonstrated in the performance data below.

4. CURRENT USERS

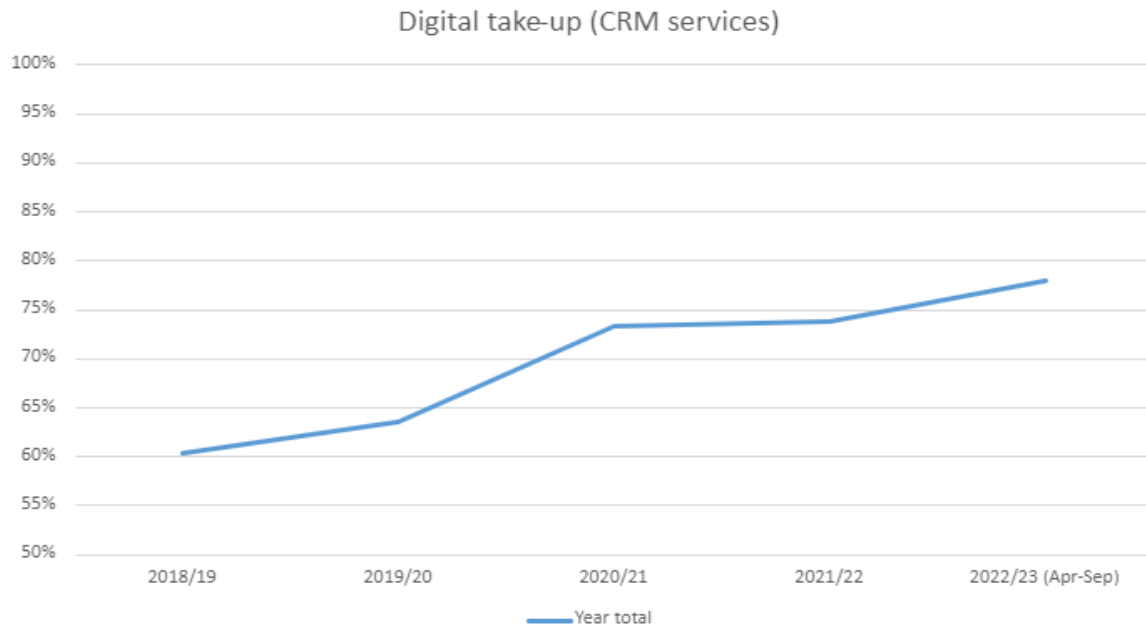
4.1 We currently use Google analytical tools to understand and gain an insight into our website users, what they are viewing and the device being used to access it. Key information can be found in Appendix A.

5 CURRENT PERFORMANCE

5.1 One of the key performance indicators we measure is the amount of digital take-up of services as opposed to telephone requests. The graph below shows the continuous improvement attained throughout the year and the rise of on-line transaction being performed by residents.

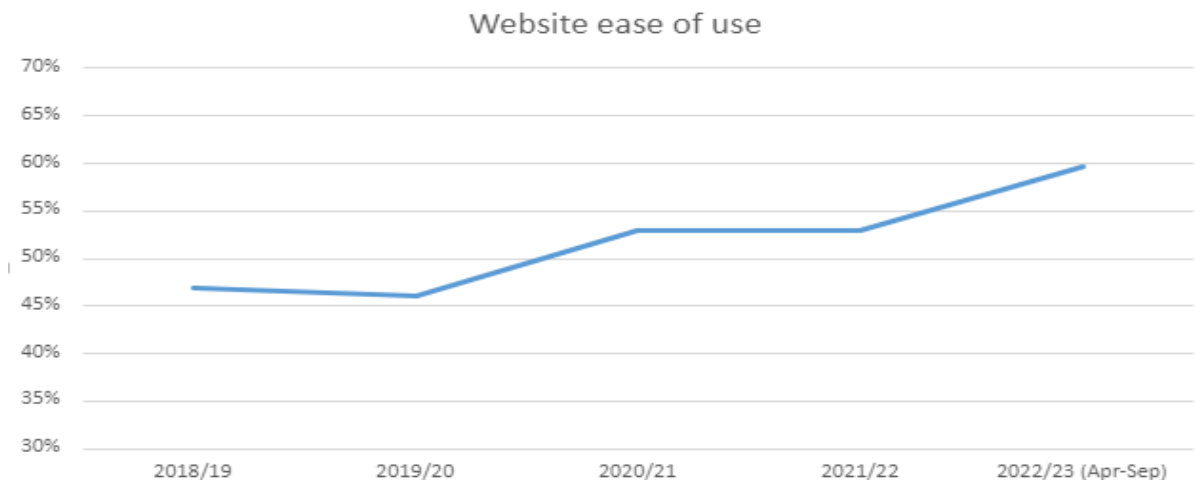
5.2 It was originally thought that our target was ambitious, but the results clearly demonstrate that residents are happy using the on-line functionalities that we have developed over time.

				CRP 118 / SP 548 Digital take-up (CRM services)		CRP 118 / SP 548 Digital take-up (CRM services)
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual		Target
	2022/23	2022/23	2022/23	2022/23		2022/23
Month	Digital transactions (web + FixMyStreet web + FixMyStreet app)	Phone transactions	Total transactions	Digital take-up	Month	Digital take-up
April	9,216	2,732	11,948	77%	April	71%
May	10,328	2,932	13,260	78%	May	72%
June	12,248	3,785	16,033	76%	June	69%
July	10,397	2,992	13,389	78%	July	70%
August	10,398	2,890	13,288	78%	August	72%
September	9,594	2,456	12,050	80%	September	70%



5.3 The other key performance indicator measured against the website is ease of use that is collated from @ 400 responses made by users each month. Members will note the significant improvement in 2022/23 due to continuous improvements.

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target setting	
Month	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Average (3yrs)	Improve by	Target 2022/23
Apr	37%	46%	53%	50%	60%	50%	1%	61%
May	47%	42%	53%	55%	60%	50%	1%	61%
Jun	47%	47%	51%	51%	58%	50%	1%	59%
Jul	51%	48%	41%	45%	60%	45%	1%	61%
Aug	53%	49%	58%	46%	60%	51%	1%	61%
Sep	52%	47%	48%	53%	58%	49%	1%	59%
Oct	47%	48%	48%	45%		47%	1%	48%



The target is reviewed each month to ensure it is challenging throughout the year and although the target improvement is relatively low against the current year it should be considered against the 3-year average given.

- 5.4 Between 21 September – 20 October 2022 we conducted a user survey on the website. This was slightly delayed due to the passing of The Queen. A relatively low number of responses were received, and the results can be found in Appendix B. Work continues to analyse the results and determining the appropriate way forward to address any highlighted concerns or issues.

6. NEXT STEPS/MOVING FORWARD

- 6.1 The website continues to be work a in progress and is continuously reviewed for accuracy and performance levels. Feedback is monitored daily to understand the needs of the customer and wherever possible, changes made where appropriate.
- 6.2 Developmental work continues to be undertaken to further develop services a fully digitised offering through the website to maintain our guiding principle of digital by design to enable residents a fully accessible 24/7. Integration to line of business systems is imperative to avoid double-entry of data.
- 6.3 Preliminary work continues to be undertaken into the feasibility of connecting all on-line functionality under a single sign-on customer account.
- 6.4 A fully mediated access to services is available for those with accessibility issues either over the telephone or through our Library network.
- 6.5 Members should be encouraged, and have confidence in, using the on-line functionality of services instead of utilising the Members enquiry for service requests as this would alleviate a high level of administrative work and duplication.

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