![Worcestershire County Council logo](worcestershire county council)

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
25 JULY 2023

WEB REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Summary

1. The Panel has requested an update on Worcestershire County Council's new website, which was relaunched in February 2023.

2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication (CMR) and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the Web Redevelopment Project.

Background

3. Residents want and expect transactional services and information to be available through their own devices, 24/7 – mirroring their experiences with on-line retail and banking. This means that digital engagement with the Council needs to evolve and expand from self-service to self-management so that customers are in charge; and can actively manage their own information and requests. Over 50% of transactions with Council customers are now undertaken online with high levels of satisfaction, making services more accessible and often improving the speed and efficiency of service delivery.

4. The Council's priority for digital customers is as follows:
    *   A fully digitally enabled Council that provides personalised content based on customer interactions
    *   An exemplar of delivering an excellent digital customer experience with the majority of customer contact via self-service channels, at the same time ensuring inclusivity for people with disabilities or other legally protected characteristics and people who don't have access to the internet or lack the skills or confidence to use it
    *   Fully embedded Government Digital Service design principles in the delivery of all customer-facing digital services
    *   Digitally inclusive by making sure the Council's customers have the right access, skills, motivation and trust to confidently go online to increase their digital literacy
    *   An organisation that delivers a seamless experience for the customer
    *   Engaging with the community and listening to what they want from digital services
    *   Designing services from a customer perspective
    *   Promoting independence and wellbeing through the use of digital services and technology.

5. To successfully achieve this digital vision, the Council has invested in a new website to provide the additional functionality required to deliver a modern, best-in-class, mobile first and personalised experience. The solution formed a key part of the Council's vision to deliver a streamlined digital experience, with the following key objectives:

    - Engage a partner to assist with the site redesign and content migration, also providing capacity for future development work if needed
    - Dynamic navigation will be included throughout the site
    - Design for mobile first delivering an excellent mobile experience
    - Greater design freedom to develop templates that cater for the varying needs of customers
    - Marketing and promotion opportunities
    - Flexibility to develop features, integrations and new templates in-house
    - Compliance with national standards
    - Content will be reviewed, refreshed and restructured to ensure customer focus.

6. The project was overseen by the Web Governance Board and is made up of the Assistant Director for IT and Digital, Officers from the Web Team and the Communications Team. The Board meets monthly.

Internal Stakeholder Engagement

7. Internal workshops took place with internal stakeholders throughout April 2022. The workshop covered:

    - Frustrations and experience with the current site
    - Who uses the Council's website
    - The ideal user experience
    - What functionality is required from the website
    - What will the measure of success be for the new website
    - What would your dream outcome for this project be?
    - What will stop that success happening?
    - Benchmarking sector specific digital properties.

8. A full summary of the workshop outputs can be viewed in Appendix 1: Summary of findings from internal stakeholder workshops held.

9. Feedback gained during these sessions was included in the functionality and design of the new website.

External Stakeholder Engagement

10. Meetings took place with the Chair and Secretary of Worcester Camera Club. The camera club provided some of the images for the website and have agreed to continue to share images for use on the website and in other marketing material.

11. Feedback from existing website users came through the "rate my page facility", on high traffic areas of the site.

12. Engagement took place with Speakeasy N.O.W.[1] to gather their requirements for the new site and feedback on the wireframes, this has been taken on board and will be reflected in the final wireframes.

13. Attendance at the Council Roadshows in August to gain more feedback on the new website wireframes and user journey testing with residents was also carried out.

14. Content review workshops took place with internal stakeholders from Adult Social Care and the Library Service during May.

15. Healthwatch Worcestershire carried out a mystery shop on the Beta site in February. An action plan has been created based on the feedback gained.

16. Volunteers from the Viewpoint Panel carried out user journey testing. The feedback gained during testing was used to develop the new website information architecture.

Test Website

17. The test version of the new website went live at the beginning of December. The test website enabled the gathering of internal and external customer feedback and provided customers with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new site.

18. Face to face feedback was received on the test website from some Members before the full Council meeting in January. Following this, an online questionnaire was sent to all Members.

19. The questionnaire was shared with residents via the website, social media channels and through the Viewpoint Panel.

20. Feedback Summary:

    - 258 responses were received. 87% feedback received came from people aged 50+
    - 78% people were able to find the information they were looking for without difficulty and found the information easy to understand
    - 87% people found the information they needed, the majority either used the website navigation or search
    - 90% people found the website visually appealing.

Accessibility

21. The Council has a statutory requirement to comply with the legislation [of The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (legislation.gov.uk)](#)

22. The Council uses Silktide to monitor the corporate website, it is a comprehensive

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[1] SpeakEasy N.O.W. is a self-advocacy charity run by people with learning disabilities who have lived experience.

web accessibility testing platform that deciphers all the jargon, and helps to find and fix accessibility, content, search engine optimisation, and quality issues.

23. Website Content Editors have been trained on Plain English principles. The website content will continue to be rewritten in Plain English to ensure that the Council's information, advice and guidance is easy to read and understand.

24. The Council uses Google Translate, a multilingual neural machine translation service developed by Google to translate the website and content from one language into another.

25. A live accessibility audit was carried out on the Council website which involved an accessibility expert spending two half-days remotely with the Council's Web Development Team identifying issues with the website. The majority the issues identified have been resolved.

26. The Council's Web Development Team are continuing to build their skills in accessibility and inclusive design.

27. Please see Appendix 2: Silktide Website Accessibility score

Benefits Achieved

28. The new website offers far more templates and content design elements that can be used on pages to display content in a variety of ways with or without images making it far more flexible.

29. The website has been designed for use on a mobile first and is fully responsive on all devices.

30. The website has been made more visually appealing using images and video content. Most of these images have been supplied by Worcestershire Camera Club.

31. The Council has developed additional navigation and improved the website Search, enabling visitors to easily find the information or service they were looking for.

32. The new templates provide the opportunity for the Council to promote more services, campaigns and news on the website.

33. The Council website has been developed to meet customer needs based on feedback given from existing internal and external customers.

Next Steps

34. The Council's digital team will resolve the remaining website accessibility issues identified during the live accessibility audit and will continue to consult and engage with Healthwatch Worcestershire and SpeakEasy N.O.W.

35. To be fully accessible, many deaf people need the Council's website content to be translated into British Sign Language. The Council will be reviewing British

Sign Language translation service options to ensure there is a provision in place for the deaf community.

36. The Council's digital team will continue to review website content to ensure it meets the style guide and will ensure that the information, advice and guidance is written using Plain English.

Conclusion

37. The new website was designed for use on a mobile first as most visitors come to the website via a mobile or tablet.

38. The new content management system is open source enabling changes to be made as and when required in the future.

39. Customer feedback has been taken on board throughout the development of the website resulting in a truly customer focused website. New feedback will be reviewed and used to continue to develop and improve the website.

40. A recent load test to measure how well the new website performs under pressure far exceeded the load test carried out on the previous website, proving that the new website is far more reliable.

41. Further workshops will be scheduled with internal stakeholders to complete remaining content reviews.

Purpose of the Meeting

42. The Panel is asked to consider the information provided and:

- determine any comments to make to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Summary of findings from internal stakeholder workshops held
Appendix 2: Silktide Website Accessibility Score.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.

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c o u n t y c o u n c i l

Appendix 1: Summary of findings from internal stakeholder workshops held

Frustrations and experience with the old site:

- Navigation (or lack of)
- Duplication of content
- Consistency
- Content too long
- Complex content
- No feedback gathering
- Outdated style
- Search no working correctly
- Consistency issues
- Clunky
- Static
- Daunting

The ideal user experience, ideal scenario:

- Users being able to self help
- Common design patterns
- Crisis buttons
- Reduction in documents
- Accessibility to AA standards
- Breadcrumbs
- More flexible layout
- More imagery, infographics & video
- Easy information discovery
- Landing page, interactive elements, signposted to the right areas, service set out well

What are the most important Journeys on the site:

- Here to help and adult social care
- Self-help actions
- Referral process
- SEND / SENDIAS
- Business customers
- School admission process
- Parents
- Foster carers
- Journalists
- New residents
- Bin collections
- To be the first port of call

Functionality:

- Feedback
- Step by step
- Chatbot
- Breadcrumbs

- 'Your visited pages'
- Personal identification
- Map of services
- Co branding, colour theming
- URL Renaming
- News section
- Search based on topic/sector
- Accessibility
- Related content
- Searchable FAQs
- Searchable documents
- Microsites
- Step by step infographics
- Report it, pay it sections

What will the measure of the success be for the new site:

- Reduction in enquiries
- Successful transfer of existing content
- To be the first port of call
- Customer feedback

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Appendix 2: Silktide Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Score

93 %

Excellent

✓ 305 ✗ 77

Accessibility ⑦

How compliant this website is with the WCAG 2.1 accessibility standard.

👥 For people improving accessibility

Level A	Level AA	Level AAA
🧍 93.5%	🧍 91.9%	🧍 89.7%