

West Lancashire Borough Council



Web Content Improvement Plan 2011-2012



www.westlancs.gov.uk

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Introduction

More so than ever before, the website is a vital element of the Council's communication and customer access strategies. It provides a key access channel for customers and enables services to be provided electronically and cost-effectively. It is far cheaper for the Council to provide services online than by phone. (2010/11 figures: web visit cost 18p, cost per call £1.38). The focus of this improvement plan is therefore to further develop and enhance the provision of online services with the aim of making the website customers' first choice when they want to access services.

Each year, all local government websites are reviewed independently by Socitm (Society for IT Managers). This year www.westlancs.gov.uk retained its 3 star rating and was commended by Socitm for its overall usability, structure and design. This is a fantastic achievement, especially during challenging economic times, and this improvement plan continues to build on this success.

Socitm's message for the future of local government websites is three-pronged:

- Usability – local government websites must be useful, useable and used and should provide syndicated content to external services. To achieve this, constant refinement and development is needed to ensure that sites remain user-focused and offer a quality experience that generates return custom.
- "Top task" orientation – A consistent approach should be adopted with the most important information and services clearly labelled.
- Mobile access – councils should consider how accessible their sites are for people using the latest smartphones, and should provide mobile-friendly versions of their sites.

The Socitm recommendations are useful guidelines to support the Council's aim of extending the provision and use of online services. This plan therefore places increased focus on task management and the need to advance online services and interactivity.

The plan outlines the steps we will take over the next year to improve the website to ensure that all web content is of a consistently high quality and that it provides the best possible platform for online services. It is designed as a working document that will be updated periodically. The Web Communications Officer will drive forward the implementation of this plan, working closely with ICT, Customer Services and Web Champions.

This plan stands alongside the Access to Services Communications plan, which focuses on action to promote the website in order to drive up use of online services.

Overview of 2010/11

	Unique Visitors	Visits	Page reads	Online forms	Payments
2010/11	434,619	1,263,589	6,346,334	7,396	14,383
	-6%	+3%	-5%	+14%	-1%
2009/10	465,279	1,229,632	6,686,477	6,500	14,486
	+33%	+20%	-33%	-20%	+15%
2008/09	348,668	1,022,496	9,996,415	8,164	12,588

Socitm rating (March 2011)
*** 3 out of 4 star rating

Key areas recommended by Socitm for improvement and development, and incorporated into the plan:

- Improvements to search
- Further enhancements and additions to A-Z
- Further minor improvements to accessibility
- Increase the information provided in 'Your West Lancs' with 'find my nearest' options
- Top tasks – highlight and signpost most popular services and information
- Ensure more external links to services not provided by the council (e.g. doctors, dentists, libraries) and make them easier to find on the site
- More syndicated content required i.e. widgets for Business Link & NHS
- Make sure consultation activities are signposted clearly throughout the website
- Develop mobile device version of the website

Areas praised by Socitm:

- Council tax section – well organised. Information comprehensive and easy to find
- Business section – useful information, good links to external resources
- Adverse weather section (purple tab – winter only) – praised the way the council reported disruptions to services during bad weather
- Do it online – brings together a comprehensive list of online services

Key

Priority:

Tasks are marked in priority order -

High priority

Medium priority

Low priority

Resources - Improvements which we would ideally like to make, but which current resources prohibit; listed in the plan for future reference.

Size:

The size of the task in terms of the amount of time taken to complete it is then indicated in the 'size of task' column, identified as follows -

B=Big

M=Medium

S=Small

Cost:

£ indicates there is a cost implication associated with the task


Socitm:

(Socitm) Indicates this improvement is in line with Socitm recommendations

Site maintenance & development

Area	Action	Size of task	Timescales & measurement	Done
Search facility High priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the search function in terms of layout & listings - ensure most relevant pages and common search terms are found Identify pdfs clearly in the search results (see accessibility section) Investigate the possibility of direct links to online services appearing in the search, marked with an icon Refine search criteria Investigate whether search terms can be highlighted in bold in the results Investigate auto-correct for spell errors and auto-prompt for words typed into search Investigate taxonomy plug-in and incorporate if useful 	B (Immediacy involvement) M S M M	Enhanced search function operating by October	In progress
A-Z list of services High priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all popular and common terms are included in the A-Z listing Add links to external agencies (libraries, public services, neighbouring councils etc) 	M (Immediacy involvement) S	More a-z terms added by July 11 External links incorporated by August 11	In progress
Top task management High priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Site Improve to monitor most frequently visited pages and regularly update top tasks in accordance Liaise with customer service for input on top tasks Use online forms data to regularly update the most popular forms list Mini-refresh of home page and side banners to clearly label 'top tasks' Adopt a consistent task management approach across all areas of the site 	B B M S M (web champ involvement)	Methods of recording top task data identified by July Top task restructure & continual maintenance in operation by November	In progress

Investment Centre website move to immediacy Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project manage transfer of Investment Centre website from external agency into immediacy • Training of Investment Centre staff 	B (external agency involvement)	Design and implementation complete by Aug WLIC populated by Sept	In progress
Directgov linking Medium priority <i>(Socitm)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor all links supplied from Directgov to WLBC. Add, amend and remove as required • Incorporate more links to Directgov from WLBC 	M	Links from Directgov ongoing Links to Directgov incorporated by August	Complete
Navigation Medium priority <i>(Socitm)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to fine tune the navigation of the website to enhance the user experience, assist in finding relevant information 	S	Ongoing task	
Main landing pages Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidy up of all main landing pages. Revise lists where necessary to categorise information and improve navigation • Enhance text, images and layout • Pull in popular online services and top tasks 	M	Update complete by October 11. Work with each division's web champs separately to fine tune	
Parish Councils Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate advice on the design, development and content of Parish Council micro websites if required. 	S	Ongoing. Two sites now live. – Support for others will be provided if required.	
Images Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew some images to refresh appearance • New banners needed to promote refuse and recycling zone move • Take new seasonal photographs for use on banners • Encourage public to submit images to "in pictures" 	M M M S	Images added by November 11 Seasonal photography ongoing In pictures promoted ongoing	
Review pdf library Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat annual review of contents of Immediacy pdf library to remove all old/unused documents. • Re-emphasise to web champs not to upload multiple copies of the same document 	B	Web champ involvement needed	

Mobile device access  Low priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate feasibility of providing a mobile device version of the website to make it easier for people to access council services via their mobile phones. Investigate providing smart phone apps 	B B	New area requiring specialist skills & knowledge. I.T resources are limited. Highly recommended by Socitm for future website improvement. This is currently marked as low priority because of resource issues. This will be reviewed in Autumn 2011.	To be reviewed Autumn 2011
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Online services, interactive and web 2.0 features

Area	Action	Size of task	Timescales & measurement	Done
Online Forms High priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue review of forms with Customer Services and continue to develop new forms to bring services closer together and increase efficiency Investigate integration with CRM to speed up process Work with all service areas to develop new online forms and improve existing ones Further improvements to payment forms Investigate ways of reviewing the process of online forms – mystery-shop them? Investigate developing online forms into a tracked process to ensure services are delivered in an efficient and timely manner Investigate replacing officer email addresses with general enquiry forms. Groups can be set up so that multiple officers can receive forms Work with OR Officer to ensure outcomes are carried through to the web Investigate re-creating pdfs so that they can be typed straight into. 	B (hindered by resources in 2010/11) B M B M S M B M M	Ongoing Forms added by November Improvements made by May 11 Reviews taking place by August 11 Tracking of online forms in development/operation by March 12	In progress
HomeFinder High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training for housing to ensure that HomeFinder system continues to meet accessibility and general web standards 	S	Training completed by May 11	Done

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure integration into WLBC website. 	S	April 11	
Online advertising £ High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to investigate allowing external companies to advertise on the council site. Liaise with legal services. 	M (IT input)	Initial investigations done. Consider more options.	
Your West Lancs Medium priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase list of things to find in the "your West Lancs" look up. 	M	Further use of mapping and "find my nearest" items added to Your West Lancs by November	
Social media Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch planning Facebook page to encourage community involvement and promotion of Your West Lancs 2027. Roll out Facebook for other areas if planning page successful. Continue with Twitter account to promote online services, news, events and web content to drive traffic to the website 	M M S	Launched May 11 Facebook used for campaigns as required Twitter used as a promotion tool, monitor increase in 'followers' & website usage	Done Ongoing
Video £ Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of videos on the website as an information tool for engaging with customers. Investigate the possibility of shared video resources with other local councils. Ensure proper transcript versions of all videos are provided for all videos 	S (video Co involvement) S S	Depending on funds Agreed to communicate opportunities with other North West councils	Ongoing
Right now Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will need reviewing in light of other refuse changes –zone collections etc General maintenance and review of questions and answers – contacts etc after reorganisation, add in any new Q&As. 	M (customer service involved) M	Information updated by Sept 11 Monitor as changes happen	Done In progress
Planning Public Access Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in upgrading the planning software for search & viewing planning application. Will offer improved service to users offering lots of 	M (IT & planning)	Added to the site by Sept 11	In progress

	new features			
Customer logins £ Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the possibility of a single secure 'user login' facility for access to personal information for customers (also links to choice based lettings below, planning systems etc..) 	B (Northgate/ Immediacy involvement)	Ongoing	

Accessibility

Area	Action	Size of task	Timescales & measurement	Done
General content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate site testing and workshops for suggestions to improve accessibility. 	M	November 11	
High priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with new accessibility practices for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headings Links Images Use of plain English Alt tags Update pdfs for improvement to their accessibility – include the words "adobe pdf" in all links. Issue new guidelines for web champs inline with revised process Investigate user testing by external agency or focus group to identify ways to improve accessibility and navigation Continue to encourage web champs to use plain English across all areas of the website 	S	November 11	Ongoing
		B	Both pdf areas will require web champ assistance and additional training.	
		S		
		M	Investigate by October 11	
		S		Ongoing
Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct refresher workshops for web champs to update skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing for the web - Accessibility - General training 	M	Workshops sessions in operation by October 11	
Medium priority				

Improvements to enhance content and usability

Area	Action	Size of task	Timescales & measurement	Done
Business High priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look to develop closer links between business and planning pages and licensing pages e.g links to building change of use info and registering a food business Investigate the use of business link widgets to stream syndicated content and provide useful links 	M	Further links developed by October	
		S	Widget incorporated by June	Done
Refuse and recycling High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zone changes: Full content review following overhaul of collection system including 'Your west Lancs', online forms and calendars Include new banners to promote and increase awareness of the zone changes Ensure prominent links and news flashes on home page. Dedicate one of the coloured tabs to refuse and recycling changes. Investigate developing an online form to send in your recycling question or tips, selected ones could then be published online Include a "news flash" section during periods of adverse weather to inform of disruptions to services Investigate possibilities of making area more interactive -games for recycling, downloadable picture for kids to print off and colour etc. 	B	Text adapted by June. Monitor on an ongoing basis throughout changes	Done
		M	Calendars updated and changes made to database system for 'Your West Lancs' by June	
		B		
		M		
		M	Online form in place by June 11	
		S	Newsflash to be included as required.	

Environmental health High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop environmental health online forms for various services Full review of layout and contents of licensing pages to ensure plain English is used throughout & simplify structure to aid users and increase efficiency. 	B M	Ongoing Updated content by June 11	Done In progress
Reorganisation & shared services High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all content in light of changes to divisions/service managers/exec managers/job titles & responsibilities Ensure all contacts and addresses are correct Ensure information contained in PDFs is also up to date 	M M B	First stage complete . Web champ involvement	
Transparency High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure statutory requirement is met for publishing data. Pull all info together onto one page. 	S	August 11	Done
Service standards High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update information on the service standard pages in accordance with reorganisation & shared service changes 	B	Information updates ongoing throughout changes	In progress
Chapel Gallery High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve layout of events/exhibitions pages Ensure syndication of content between WLBC and chapelgallery.org Develop an online form for booking events? 	M S S	Information updated by September 11	
Community Safety High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of online form for reporting problems 	S	New form in use by July 11	
Equality section High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New section to be developed to meet the 2010 Equality Act 	S	July 11	Done

Your views Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to maintain a comprehensive and accurate database of current, planned and recent consultation activity archiving past activity 	S		Ongoing
Council and democracy Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of all council and democracy information Ensure councillors' expenses are published and easy to find Investigate if any improvements can be made to the Coins system. 	B S M (software company involve)	Updated by December 11 Improvements made by December 11	
Events Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate improvements to the way events are currently listed & use of events plugins Investigate including non-council events Investigate an events calendar on the home page and other methods of better event promotion. 	B M M	Improvements made by September 11	
Countryside Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update park & ranger information Develop rangers' pages. Photos of the rangers, profiles. Include info on how to be a volunteer ranger – possibly a few faces and quotes from other volunteer rangers about the experience. Add images, maps and any self-guided walks (pdfs) to country park pages. Include a virtual leaflet rack and pull together information on walks, places to visit etc.. 	M M S M	Updated by July 11 Updated by August 11 Updated by July 11 Updated by October 11	Done In progress
Printing from the website Medium priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate creating new print friendly style sheets (CSS) to ensure that web pages content is correctly formatted when printed. 	B (IT task)	Updated by March 12	
A-Z of clubs Low priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor the feasibility of continuing this service online 	S	Decision on continuation made by September 11	
Cemeteries Low priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and maps for locations of cemeteries Possibly include in find my nearest 	S S	Info added by September Info included as part of the find my nearest enhancements	

(Socitm)				
Neighbouring councils Low priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page of info and links to our neighbouring councils including maps etc showing borders 	S	Info and maps added by October	
NHS Choices info Low priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that NHS info such as doctors and dentists can be found in "Your West Lancs". Investigate whether a widget can be incorporated to deliver syndicated content 	S S	October 11	
LCC info Low priority (Socitm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing monitoring of services offered. Make sure links are up to date as County often change pages 	S		Ongoing
Tourism Low priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and improve content Improve layout & images of tourism pages Improve links to local tourist attractions Link into events, leisure and external events Link to tourist board for accommodation and places to eat 	B	Under review. Completion dependent upon appointment of new web champ	

Strategy

Area	Action	Size of task	Timescales & measurement	Done
Upgrade £ High priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Complete scheduled upgrade of Immediacy content management system to maintain efficiency of the website.	B (Immediacy & IT)	To be completed by March 2012	