



**ARTICLE NO: 1D**

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERS' UPDATE 2011/12**

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**Article of: Director of Transformation**

**Relevant Head of Service: Transformation Manager**

**Issue: 2                      September 2011**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Westley**

**Contact for further information: Ms E. Leigh (Extn. 5433)  
(E-mail: [edwina.leigh@westlancs.gov.uk](mailto:edwina.leigh@westlancs.gov.uk))**

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**SUBJECT: WEB IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2011/12**

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## **1.0 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE**

- 1.1 To inform members of plans to further improve the Council website [www.westlancs.gov.uk](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk).
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## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A Web Improvement Plan (WIP) is produced each year by the Communications and Consultation team in liaison with ICT, Customer Services and web champions. The WIP focuses on improving online services and interactivity, website content and usability. To support the WIP, an annual Access to Services (A2S) Communications Plan is also produced, focusing on the promotion of the website in order to drive up use of online services.
- 3.2 The main driver of website improvement is value for money. Analysis of the Council's costs shows that it is around seven times cheaper for the Council to provide a service online than by telephone (10/11 figures are: face-to-face - £3.36; phone - £1.38; website - £0.18.) Providing services and information online can also reduce avoidable contact. The website therefore can make an important contribution to efficiency.
- 3.3 The success of the website results from excellent partnership work and the input of expertise from a range of officers. The Web Communications Officer (WCO) in the Communications and Consultation Unit leads the day-to-day content work while the Web Analyst/Developer in the ICT Team takes the lead on the technical side. Both officers work closely together on a daily basis to maintain

and improve the website. In addition, there is input from other ICT staff and the Customer Services team in relation to online services. Also, a network of around 30 web champions are responsible for specific areas of the website, and submit amendments for approval by the WCO.

#### **4.0 REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN 2010/11**

4.1 Good progress has been made with many of the tasks listed in the 2010/11 web improvement plan. The main achievements include:

- A revised home page design to give a new, fresh look with more prominence for online services and interactive facilities
- Complete review of all website pages to improve accessibility for disabled people, particularly those using screen readers
- Review of the online services pages, to making the online forms easier to access and making the most popular tasks more prominent.
- Introduction of an e-petition system in December 2010 to meet the new statutory requirements
- Publication of information about the Council's spending on items over £500, contracts and senior management salaries in line with the Government's transparency agenda
- Improvement of the business section of website
- Improvements to the website's search facility
- Using SiteImprove to send automatic alerts to web champions about broken links and spelling errors. This has helped to radically reduce the number of broken links.
- Launch of a video – Wake up – do it online, anytime – to promote online services. The video is on the website and was launched with a press release and posters.

4.2 In particular, effort focused on ensuring that website content was of a consistently high quality: well-written, accurate and up-to-date. The majority of this work is carried out successfully by web champions.

4.3 The website continues to be rated by Socitm (Society of IT Managers) as one of the best local authority sites in the country. In the annual survey results announced in March 2011 it retained its three-star rating. The assessor's overall comment was: "A very good site in terms of structure and design. The information provided is concise and focused. West Lancs clearly seems to be wanting to encourage citizens to use the website services as much as possible. Great 'do it online' section." Socitm also praised the sections on council tax, business and adverse weather.

4.4 The Socitm report lists a range of general recommendations for website development. These have been taken as useful guidelines and some of the recommendations which are appropriate and achievable for West Lancs have been incorporated into the new Web Improvement Plan.

#### **5.0 IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2011/12**

5.1 The overriding aim of the 2011/12 WIP is to support the Council's drive for efficiency, in line with Business Plan objectives. The main objective therefore is

to further improve and enhance the provision of online services with the aim of making the website the first choice for new and existing customers when they want to access services. In order to do this, the site must be consistently accurate and up-to-date, easy-to-use and accessible for all customers.

5.2 The plan lists more than 45 actions within a range of categories, and rates each action by priority and size. Actions which require funding and/or the involvement of outside agencies are also highlighted.

5.3 The high priority actions include:

- Regular analysis of user statistics for 'top task' management – i.e. assessing which online services and payments are most popular and which we wish to make more prominent on the site.
- Working with the OR Manager to ensure outcomes are carried through to the website and making further progress with online form integration into the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- More improvements to website pages to meet accessibility standards and ensure they are easy to use for people with disabilities.
- Developing a new improved website, on Immediacy, for the West Lancs Investment Centre.
- Further improvements to the search function and the A-Z
- Scheduled upgrade of the content management system in order to maintain efficiency

5.4 Some of the tasks listed in the plan have already been completed, for example the development of environmental health online forms following the OR recommendations and the review of the refuse and recycling section in preparation for the change to zones. Many other tasks are now underway.

## **6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

6.1 Continued improvement of the website will continue to migrate customers to electronic methods of communication as well as retaining customers who already use this access channel. This will further enhance customers' ability to access services and information and will therefore contribute to a range of community strategy objectives.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no financial implications as the work listed in the WIP can be funded from the existing web improvement budget.

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 If work to improve the website is not carried out, the Council will fail to provide the improvements in online service provision that customers expect, which will in turn drive up avoidable contact and expenditure.

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is no evidence from an initial assessment of an adverse impact on equality in relation to the equality target groups.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: web improvement plan 2011/12