

REPORT TO	ON
CABINET	16 October 2019



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	REPORT OF
South Ribble Borough Council – Website re-fresh	Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets	Director of Customer and Digital

Is this report a KEY DECISION (i.e. more than £100,000 or impacting on more than 2 Borough wards?)	Yes
Is this report on the Statutory Cabinet Forward Plan ?	Yes
Is the request outside the policy and budgetary framework and therefore subject to confirmation at full Council?	No
Is this report confidential?	No

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To outline options for a re-fresh of the South Ribble Borough Council website (www.southribble.gov.uk).

PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Agree to fund the 2019/20 costs from £20,000 allocated in the Place Promotion budget and the remainder from 2019/20 underspends. Approve an annual increase in the revenue budget from 2020/21 onwards to fund the annual licence and maintenance costs.
3. That Cabinet agree to a joint procurement process with Chorley Council in which South Ribble BC will take the lead.
4. That Cabinet agree to waive all relevant Contract Procedure Rules (in particular Paragraph 11 [High Value Procurement]) to allow the council to award the contract to the shortlisted providers rather than go through a procurement exercise through the Chest
5. That Cabinet agree to delegate to the Director of Customer and Digital in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to allow a direct award to the provider offering the most advantageous solution following completion of market engagement.

6. That Cabinet agree to further work regarding the merging of SRBC sub-sites into the main Content Management System (CMS) to provide budgetary and operational efficiencies.
7. That Cabinet note the intention to review self-service portals with a view to building these into the main CMS to provide budgetary and operational efficiencies.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

8. The Digital to Improve Programme sets out the way we will advance our digital capability over the next three years, ultimately enabling us to better serve our borough, while improving the day-to-day experience for those working within the bounds of the organisation.
9. The Programme identifies that the most significant and needed initiative of all identified within the strategy is concerning the website and self-service. A refreshed website will also act as an enabler for other key projects within the strategy and provide a basis to build on the council's channel shift ambitions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

10. This report outlines the proposal to refresh the South Ribble Borough Council website by way of replacing the current Content Management System (CMS) and to re-design the website with self-service and accessibility as its focus.
11. The report outlines considerations in relation to Chorley Council who too are looking to embark on a project such as this. Both project scopes are similar and the report outlines a joint procurement approach for moving forward with the project.
12. The approach will see budgetary and operational efficiencies and the proposal is for South Ribble Borough Council to lead on the project.
13. Each Council have conducted soft market testing with a number of suppliers individually and as a joint project. The proposal is for Cabinet to approve the joint procurement method and to waive Contract Procedure Rules, in particular Paragraph 11 (High Value Procurement) and allow a direct award to the provider offering the most advantageous solution following completion of market engagement.
14. Cabinet are also asked to agree to further work to merge SRBC sub-sites into the main Content Management System (CMS) to provide budgetary and operational efficiencies.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

15. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Excellence and Financial Sustainability	X
Health and Wellbeing	X
Place	X
People	X

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

16. Project outline

17. This project will aim to establish a completely refreshed, simple, modern and engaging website and self-serve experience for our stakeholders.
18. The current website is not user-friendly and it is difficult for users to navigate and access self-service portals. There are limitations within the Content Management System (CMS) meaning that our website allows for limited flexibility by way of navigation and design.

19. The website will be built on principles of accessibility and ease of use, ensuring that digital services are available for as many residents as possible.

20. Digital to Improve Considerations

21. The new site and service forms should follow Government Digital Service standards and styling to keep consistent with that of other local and central government sites.

22. In order to comply with accessibility standards and legislation any new CMS provider must be able to incorporate the council's existing accessibility tools provided by Browsealoud. This will assist in providing a seamless transition for those residents making use of the accessibility tools.

23. One of the key findings from the research phase of the Digital to Improve Programme was that the website contained a number of different logins which made self-service complicated for residents. Currently the council's online portfolio contains at least five different registration and login areas (Firmstep, eBilling, Modern Gov, Public Access for Planning and Public Access for Licensing). Included within the scope of this project is the ambition to remove as many barriers to self-service as possible, and therefore provide single sign on access to as much of the website as possible.

24. A draft detailed technical specification has been developed by the SRBC ICT Team with support from an external IT consultant. **Appendix 1**. The specification will be developed further following confirmation of the joint project with Chorley Council. All bidders during the procurement process will be asked to confirm their technological solution complies.

25. Outcomes

26. Key outcomes from this project are listed below:

- Increased engagement with the website and all digitally delivered services;
- Increased awareness of the services available customers digitally;
- Significant improvements in channel-shift towards digital self-service based interaction, thereby reducing the number or more expensive phone and face-to-face transactions;
- Improved perception of the Council and its innovation/excellence, especially to the younger demographic who will typically measure against well-established digital service providers;
- Established insight into digital performance and channel shift success via regular proactive monitoring of customer engagement with digital services.

27. Following this, the Communications Team and ICT teams engaged a number of known suppliers to initiate informal discussions in relation to a project, its approximate timescales and indicative costs.

28. Consultation with key staff and Cabinet Members was also undertaken - responses of which will inform the project brief. User research has been carried out with internal users to allow us to understand where the site is failing, what users pain points are and what problems we need to solve as part of our new website and online services. This work has allowed us to understand what our users' needs are and will help us to design our site and online services based on those needs.
29. The findings concluded that the Council's current website is not user friendly, nor is it accessible or mobile responsive. Users struggled to find information and online services due to a variety of different reasons that are further explained in this report.
- 30. Scope**
31. A detailed project scope has been created outlining the project's purpose, outcomes, risk and high-level approach. The proposed project scope will see the:
- Replacement of the CMS;
 - Retention of current forms and workflows solution (Firmstep);
 - Resolution of issues with single sign on for Capita (e-Citizen - Council Tax and Benefits citizen access);
 - Resolution of issues with single sign on for IDOX (planning online citizen access);
 - Resolution of issues for single sign on for MODGOV (citizens access);
 - Web content refreshed/re-written;
 - A review of service forms end to end;
32. Timeline for implementation is April 2020 go live running parallel with the existing website with Full go live from September 2020.
33. The Communications Team and ICT teams have engaged a number of known suppliers to initiate soft market testing and informal discussions in relation to the project, its approximate timescales and indicative costs.
34. Consultation with key staff and Cabinet Members has also been undertaken responses from which will inform the project brief. User research has been carried out with internal users to allow us to understand where the site is failing, what users pain points are and what problems we need to solve as part of our new website and online services. This work has allowed us to understand what our users' needs are and will help us to design our site and online services based on those needs.

Considerations

35. Chorley Council are also initiating a project to update the CMS for their website.
36. Initial discussions have been had with Chorley's team as we have found that we have a similar project scope and project timeline and are speaking with similar suppliers.
37. Given the future aspiration of a shared services approach with SRBC and Chorley Council – there could be potential for a joint procurement process which could 1. Reduce the overall cost of the project and 2. Futureproof the respective websites if a decision was made to merge the two later down the line.

PROPOSALS

38. Joint procurement exercise with Chorley Council

39. Both Councils would share the annual license cost of chosen CMS with both websites hosted on the same cloud solution.
40. Each Council would still have its own website, however both would be using the same template (design) so the websites would look the same, other than branding and content.
41. Each Council would not be able to access the back end of the other Council's site. They would be separate with each Council responsible for their own sites.
42. Having the same template as each other would be a great advantage if further shared services took place in the future allowing one centralised website to be used for both Councils.
43. South Ribble and Chorley residents would be familiar with the site, as they will have all been using the same site template (design) meaning other than branding, residents wouldn't see much change at all if we were to combine in the future to have one centralised website.
44. If this option is chosen then a project team across SRBC and Chorley will be created to bring together an agreement on a technical specification and requirements for a new CMS.
45. Demonstrations will then take place for the shared wider team to look at potential platform providers as well as discussions with them how a shared platform would work.
46. Both Councils have already been advised by providers that sharing is possible and a good option.
47. An agreement would then be made on a procurement method and what solution to award a contract.

48. Procurement method/route options

- 49. Both Councils are looking to resolve single sign-on issues however, each Council will seek to procure this separately. A separate report to seek approval for this spend will be brought to Cabinet after November 2019.
- 50. The anticipated overall joint project cost over a 3 year or 5 year period will be above £100,000 however, it is worth noting that South Ribble and Chorley Councils will split this cost 50/50.
- 51. In order to take advantage of collaborative working and sharing costs it is proposed to carry out a joint procurement with SRBC acting as lead authority in accordance with paragraph 32 of Contract Procedure Rules.
- 52. Both CBC and SRBC have collectively developed a statement of requirements / Specification and carried out soft market testing with five providers and identified indicative costs which suggest 50% savings can be achieved by procuring jointly.
- 53. In view of the extensive market research carried out, it is requested for Cabinet to approve a waiver of Contracts Procedure Rules to allow officers to negotiate and award directly with the shortlisted providers following soft market testing.
- 54. The point of reliance in Contract Procedure Rules is as follows: 39.1 “the nature of the market for the works to be carried out or the goods or services to be provided has been investigated and is demonstrated to be such that a departure from the requirements of the Rules is justifiable;”.
- 55. As described above if approved, next steps will be to create a joint Council project group to meet with suppliers and to arrange demonstrations to key decision makers.

56. Timescales

Cabinet Report recommendation approvals for commencement of project (both Councils).	October 2019
Invitations for suppliers and demonstrations to key decision makers.	October/November 2019
	November 2019

Cabinet report decision of preferred supplier.	
Award of contract.	November 2019
Cabinet report approval (single sign-on).	January 2020

57. Merging of SRBC sub-sites into the main CMS to provide budgetary and operational efficiencies

58. There are 7 live sites in linked to SRBC:

- businessinsouthribble.co.uk
- centrallancashirebusinessevents.co.uk
- leylandfestival.co.uk
- southribblemuseum.co.uk
- visitleyland.co.uk
- southribblepartnership.co.uk
- centralparks.info

59. All sites are hosted separately from the main South Ribble site CMS, are managed by separate budgets and are controlled by separate teams.

60. There are budgetary and efficiency gains to be had by centralising the cross organisation website budgets and to bring each website into a central control team.

61. It is recognised that this work, if approved, will need further cost and operational investigation and may be delivered as a later phase of the wider website project.

62. A number of the above identified sites are not encrypted and are hosted on out of date content management systems. This could pose a potential risk and reduces the reputation of the site.

63. It should also be noted that sites above have not been developed to support the new Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and could therefore be subject to challenge. Merging the sites to the same CMS as the corporate website will not only provide benefits from a system consolidation perspective, but also ensure that the council's entire web presence meets accessibility requirements and legislation.

CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

64. Consultation was carried out with staff members and cabinet members where their current use of the website was explored and challenges raised.
65. Findings showed that the website lacked modernity, was not user friendly and did not work effectively on mobile. It was highlighted that a lot of the content on the website was out of date and needs to be 'cleaned' and updated.
66. Further consultation will take place with key stakeholders as the project progresses.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

67. Do nothing. The option to leave the website as it is was rejected as it offers poor usability and discourages self-service for customers.
68. Procuring the project as a lone authority. This was considered however it became clear that the project timeline and scope from both South Ribble and Chorley Councils were similar and that a joint approach could provide significant budgetary savings and operational efficiency gains.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

69. Soft market testing has been undertaken by both South Ribble and Chorley Councils looking at industry leaders and relevant local suppliers.
70. The approximate cost for the design and build of both websites and on-going hosting will be circa £100,000 over 3 years and £160,000 over 5 years. The costs are subject to the procurement process described above and they will be split across South Ribble and Chorley Councils 50/50.
71. The overall project cost over 3 or 5 years will be split as follows: Design, build and initial licence one off costs (circa £43,000) will be taken before the end of the financial year. Then on a yearly basis annual licence and maintenance costs will be taken (circa £30,000).
72. From a budgetary point of view, for the Year 1 costs, £20,000 has been allocated from the Place Promotion budget and the remainder will come from revenue under spend.

For annual costs thereafter, this figure will be built in to existing revenue budgets which cover provisions such as annual licence fees.

73. To enable Single Sign-On between Firmstep and the council's other self-service portals, Application Programme Interfaces (APIs) will need to be purchased from those suppliers. Costs are being established for API functionality and will be shared as part of a report to Cabinet in January 2020.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

74. The website will be created to comply with relevant Local Authority accessibility legislation.
75. This will not be the case for any sub-sites related to the Council. This will have to be addressed moving forward.

AIR QUALITY IMPLICATIONS

76. None.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS.

77. None.

ICT/TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

78. As discussed within the body of the report the website refresh is a significant project within the Digital to Improve Programme and will act as an enabler for other projects and the council's channel shift ambitions.
79. From an infrastructure perspective, as a requirement of the new CMS is that it is cloud hosted, this ensures that there is limited infrastructure changes required. Firewall rules, Domain Name Servers (DNS) entries and Uniform Resource Locator (URL) routing will need to be re-configured but no additional site servers or infrastructure will be required.

PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

80. None.

RISK MANAGEMENT

81. Risks for a single authority procured website update have been considered as part of the Website Scoping document (background document 2).

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

82. The website will be created to comply with relevant Local Authority accessibility legislation.

RELEVANT DIRECTORS RECOMMENDATIONS

83. The proposed refresh of the Councils website will advance our digital capability, ultimately enabling the Council to better serve our borough, while improving the day-to-day experience for those working within the organisation.

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

84. The website development project is part of the Council's Digital Strategy and working in partnership with Chorley Council provides economic benefits to both authorities. Going forward, any budget savings secured from the digital programme will be reflected in the Council's medium term financial strategy.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

85. The proposal is to carry out a joint procurement exercise with Chorley Borough Council. The carrying out of such a joint procurement exercise is permitted by the Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs). Inevitably a joint procurement could result in significant savings for both councils.
86. The intention is to invite some preferred suppliers to bid. This follows on from a thorough testing of the market.
87. For the reasons explained in the report it makes practical sense to proceed along these lines.
88. However, this will not be fully compliant with CPRs. Ordinarily you would be going through the Chest for a procurement of this value. Hence the proposal that Cabinet should agree to waive those relevant parts of the CPRs. This can only be done in exceptional circumstances. The report above sets out what those circumstances are.
89. Ultimately formal contract documentation will be entered into to protect the interests of both councils.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Digital to Improve Strategy
Website Scope

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Draft Technical Specification

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