

Council Website Performance & Improvement

Committee name	Corporate, Finance & Property Select Committee
Officer reporting	Mike Talbot – Corporate Services
Papers with report	Appendices A and B
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The report provides an overview of the Council's website provision together with details of the ongoing development of the website platform and associated resident contact initiatives via the Council's Business Improvement Delivery (BID) transformation programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Select Committee:

- 1. Notes the development work that has been completed on the Council's website; and**
- 2. Notes the ongoing improvements to the website and other resident contact technology currently being delivered through BID's Digital Transformation projects.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Council's Website Platform

One of the most striking aspects of the Council's website is that it is not a single entity or system, rather a network of different systems, portals, webforms and third-party applications. The website is built around a main 'front facing' platform, provided by Goss Interactive.

GOSS Interactive provides a hosted web platform and web forms, enabling staff to design, develop and integrate digital end to end services for the Council. The Council's website has been redesigned with a simple navigation to services and payments, making it easier to use on all 'smart' devices.

GOSS Interactive also provides a platform to host links to the planning website and many other third-party sites used by the Council and a platform for both the Council's legacy website and Horizon, the Council's Intranet site.

As part of the Digital Transformation project, the ICT team, in collaboration with the Contact Centre, the Corporate Communications team and GOSS Interactive, are utilising web forms, the web platform, modules and technologies, to continue to modernise and standardise the look and feel of the Council's website, transform its processes, reduce unnecessary complexity and improve the overall take-up and online experience for residents

Classification: Public

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The GOSS Interactive platform also provides Content Management Service (CMS) capabilities, enabling case management and reporting functionality.

In addition to the GOSS Interactive system, there are over 35 other third-party applications and portals providing specialised services to residents and other visitors to the website. These systems range from the e-recruitment system used by the Council to systems used across Housing, Libraries and Parking, to name just a few (see Appendix A).

Providing Information and Enabling Activities

The Council's website serves two main purposes, it provides information to residents and it enables resident to transact with the Council, for example by making a payment, ordering recycling bags or reporting an incident. The quality of information provided on the website is ensured through a content management process while transactions are completed using the My Hillingdon Account or through third-party applications and portals.

Content Management

One challenge of content management is to ensure that links are regularly updated. This was a particular issue when we transitioned to the new website especially from archived web pages or where external third-party providers made changes without informing the web team. We have introduced GOSS functionality which alerts the web team to any changed or broken links so these can now be maintained effectively.

One objective when implementing the new website was to simplify the content and improve navigation. To date, as part of the web relaunch project, our web team have reviewed more than 3,000 web pages and removed 2,224 obsolete pages. There are approximately 316 content pages which still need to be reviewed.

My Hillingdon Account

In June the Council introduced the new My Hillingdon Account, allowing residents to complete many transactions through a new online account. This involved transitioning services from a legacy 'self-service' account provided by Sector UK Ltd. and from the Onyx system to GOSS Interactive.

The benefit of this change is that residents are now able to open new cases in real time, receive progress updates and add additional information to an ongoing case as appropriate. The system is far more intuitive and user-friendly. While it is beneficial for residents to raise cases through the My Hillingdon Account, they can alternatively choose to report issues outside of an account and even anonymously.

The launch of My Hillingdon Account was well-publicised together with the required information allowing residents to create a new My Hillingdon Account, given the old system became defunct. Any resident attempting to log in to the old system was redirected to a new 'create an account' page in GOSS Interactive.

Since the 16 June 2021 39,057 users have registered a new My Hillingdon Account, equivalent to 40% of the residential properties within the Borough. Since this date 46,533 incidents have been recorded through a My Hillingdon Account, 77% of which have been directly raised by residents online, significantly reducing the need for the contact centre to record incidents. In addition, My Hillingdon Account enables assisted digital support for those residents who require telephone assistance to complete a request.

There are currently 211 separate self-service 'report it' functions and over 300 online forms providing residents with 24/7 service.

BID Digital Programme - Ongoing Development of the Website

The website is a key tool in engaging with residents to both enable self-service and positively manage demand, not only for transactional activity but also to provide information and advice, for which we currently receive a high volume of calls in the contact centre for a range of services.

BID projects are taking an end-to-end pathway approach to redesigning customer journeys in order to inform what information is required on-line for residents to fulfil their enquiry at the first point of contact, ideally utilising the web.

A good example of this is a review of the booking repairs pathway. From an analysis of the contact centre call data, we know a large number of tenants call about a repair that they are responsible for. Understanding this has helped us redesign the webpages so this information is much more visible and designed to inform tenants of what we do versus what they are responsible for, then if required lead them into the online booking procedure that works directly with the back office systems. The overall aim is to reduce the need for tenants to ring the Council (at the time of drafting this report the webpages were undergoing their final review before go-live).

As part of the BID Waste Accelerator project, we are developing a "chat bot" for the website that will help respond to general waste queries quickly. So instead of a resident needing to find the right page for the question they have they will be able to use the chat bot, by typing in their request, e.g. "what can I recycle?" The chatbot will use the relevant information on the web to present the right answer to the resident immediately, with a link to the correct webpage for more information. Feedback from the soft launch of this tool through the BID Experience Accelerator project will inform further development of this concept for a wider range of query types.

As part of the Housing Pathway redesign work, we are also improving pathways for key queries such as "pay my rent" to make them more intuitive and relevant based on feedback gathered from tenants.

Alongside improving the take up of self-service options, we are also improving the business processes that sit behind the website to reduce handoffs between teams and streamline the processing of resident requests. Initial examples of this include the use of portals in social care that take referrals from professionals which are taken straight into the back office system for processing by the relevant professional, without the need to re-key information from system to system. We are also implementing a new portal to streamline the ASBET referral process and make communication and engagement with residents electronically much more streamlined and effective. This will enable the Council to communicate more proactively with residents on these

issues and remove the need for residents to chase for progress updates. This system will be live early in 2022.

Streamlining processes also means reducing the use of emails for residents to contact the Council. We are working our way through the website, removing generic email addresses where possible. Where this cannot be done, we will create webforms so the resident can complete the enquiry with the information and advice online ensuring that we have all the right information to respond to the enquiry without having to go backwards and forwards to gain a complete picture.

Ongoing Challenges

The requirement to use third-party systems and portals is potentially the greatest challenge we have to website performance. While we aim to provide a seamless online experience for our residents these third-party applications, by their very nature, can require additional sign-in information or behave in different ways to the websites main GOSS Interactive webpages.

While a complete end-to-end pathway review of services provides the best solution to determining what information and online tools are best deployed, this can be a relatively time-consuming process given the large range of services the Council offers.

System Stability and Performance

Our ICT team report that the GOSS system is stable and easily meets the minimum 99.9% availability requirement outlined in the provider's contract. Where there have been some resident complaints about the speed of the website, this has mainly been an issue with the users' own browser settings, rather than with the Council's platform.

Implications on related Council policies

None at this stage.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

This report shares the progress made in respect of improvements to the Council's website to the benefit of local residents.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

Appendix A: Services with 3rd Party Microsite or Portal Usage

Website / Microsite
My Hillingdon
Adult Learning / Training Courses
Adult Social Care
Benefits (Universal Credit)
Benefits + Council Tax Self-Service
Benefits Calculator
Blue Badges
Bunker
Business Rates
Contract Finder
Council and Democracy
Council Tenders
Families Information Directory
Freedom Passes
Hillingdon Air
Homelessness
Housing Register
Housing Repairs
Housing Tenancy Account
Jobs
Landlord Payments
Leisure Centres
Libraries
Libraries (e-books)
Licence Register
Manor Farm - Venue Availability
Music Hub
Online Payments
Parking Permits (renewal)
Parking Tickets (PCN) self-service
Planning + Building Control - Local and National
Provider Portal
Registrars
School Admissions
SEND Local offer
Supplier incentive program
Theatres

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Appendix B: Ongoing GOSS Interactive Development and Improvements

Service
Contractor Portal
Planning
Building Control
Schools & Admissions
Registrars
Electoral Services
Housing Repairs
Housing Needs & Reception
Housing Tenancy
Hillingdon Social Care Direct
Members Enquiries, Complaints, FOIs & SARs
Parking
Blue Badges
Brown Badges
Freedom Passes