CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL   Executive report

Portfolio area: Strategy & Performance

Date of Meeting: 17th December 2001

Public

Key Decision: No   **Recorded in Forward Plan: Yes/No**

Inside/Outside Policy Framework

Title: **WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT**
Report of: **Town Clerk & Chief Executive**
Report reference: TC247/01 .

Summary: This report gives further details on options for developing and enhancing the Council's web site.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Head of Communications working with the Head of IT are approved to take the following actions to address a number of issues:

- Review of the web site guidelines (appendix 3) which were produced when the web site was originally being developed, to incorporate more recent guidelines and good practice for local authority web sites
- An audit and review of all council service sites to clarify how corporate identity should be used on all and how they link into the corporate site
- Setting up of an officer group with representatives from all departments who can take ownership of departmental pages and have responsibility for checking that information is up to date and input into the development of the site.

It is recommended that the Executive indicates its preference in the future development for the web site from the options below:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

- In partnership eg through the Local Strategic Partnership
- External procurement
- In-house resource
- Maintain current level of resource.

And determines whether or not to support the budget bid elsewhere on this agenda.

Contact Officer: Sharon McKee **Ext:** 7110

1.   BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

1. Introduction

1.1 There are many external and internal challenges for the development of the City Council's web site and electronic communications as a whole. National targets to have all services on line by 2005, the need for more customer focused services as well as more efficient and effective delivery of services, increasing public use of the web, an increased public expectation for web based services more demand for consultation and more transparent government with increased public information and participation all place increasing demands on developing electronic communications. This report aims to give a development plan for the web site and details of options which are available to enable delivery of this plan.

1.2 A successful web-site serves the Council and links to the Council's key objectives in a number of areas. It promotes Carlisle to a potential massive audience, it is a method of improving performance, and is a vehicle for supporting the delivery of Council policies in the area of crime and disorder, sustainable transport and environment policies.

In addition to this it is one of the most cost effective methods of communication and compares very favourably with traditional methods of publication – it spends the community's money wisely.

2. Carlisle City web site - background

2.1 Carlisle City Council launched its web site in February 2001, after trials with the Citizens Panel and internal staff, and is largely an information based site with little interactivity. The site was commended by Carlisle Access Group for its accessibility for people with visual impairments.

2.2 It was established through a mix of both external and inhouse resources. There were however no recurrent resources identified and no funds for further development. Currently approximately eight hours of one design post is allocated to maintaining and updating the site at a basic level. Updating relies on information being passed through by the departments or services for their relevant pages.

2.3 Some services have requested their own further sites and to date both Tullie House and Leisuretime have set up their own sites created by external organisations, which

have been linked to the corporate site. Tourism also has for some years had its own separate site (but now linked to the corporate site) in historic-carlisle.

2.4 Automated quarterly reports monitor usage of the web site (see appendix 1). The www.carlisle.gov.uk site has nearly doubled the number of hits within the past six months and currently averages around 5,400 hits per day. In the last quarter around 17% of people were repeat visitors to the site.

3. Potential development of the site

3.1 The site itself just as an information tool is recognised as becoming dated and is difficult to use unless a visitor is familiar with the council structures. Many local authority web sites have become more user friendly by developing different entry sites for different customers eg citizens, business, visitors, etc – or by developing along the lines of 'life events' eg moving to the area (appendix 2).

3.2 Updating is irregular as currently the onus is on individual departments and services to send through new or up to date information for inclusion. The current allocation of hours for maintenance means that only basic updating can be done and further development of the web site is not possible.

3.3 All authorities are now being encouraged to move towards a more interactive and accessible web sites, bring services on line and encourage repeat visits. To enable this development to take place, potential for interactive services must be included in the brief for a full redesign of the site. Proposed developments over the next two years for the site include:

- Redesign of the corporate site to make it more user friendly, accessible and easier to use.
- Ensure all service sites are accessible from the corporate site and adhere to a corporate identity.
- Developed along with cash receipting systems to enable financial transactions.
- Developed along with back office systems to enable interactive transactions.
- Information and forms to be made available over the internet but also can be filled in and returned via the web site.
- Consultation and citizens engagement – on major issues, local decisions, etc.
- Development of a complementary intranet site for staff and members.
- Broadcast of meetings, events etc live over the internet via web cam.

4. Options for development of the web site

There are four possible options which could be looked at with regard to undertaking web site development proposals:
- In partnership eg through the Local Strategic Partnership
- External procurement
- In-house resource
- Maintain current level of resource

These options are discussed below:

- **LSP**

    Although developing web sites or interactive services in partnership is a possibility and an opportunity which may be revisited in the future, following recent discussions with Eden Council this is currently not a practical option due to resource limitations at this time.

- **External procurement of services**
    - Advantages:

    the set up of a redesigned web site can be a one off cost;

    the choice of companies which offer web design services is expanding.

    - Disadvantages:

    If the web site is to be developed beyond a purely information based site, there will need to be more development than just an initial redesign and each stage of development will mean further costs;

    there should be an ongoing maintenance cost involved depending on the level of service;

    any immediate/ instant changes needed in the information may not be possible if they are not written into the service agreement.

    - Estimated cost: after comparing with other local authority web there is a variation in costs for external procurement. However as a ball park figure to set up and design a basic site, could cost between £10-£20,000 with a further £2,000 - £17,000 (dependent on level of service) annual cost for management of the site. To develop initiatives beyond a basic site would incur further costs.

- **In-house web designer**
    - Advantages:

the post holder working closely with IT would have full control over the development of the site;

the post holder would be able to not only initially redesign the site but be involved in the future development of online service, interactivity, accessibility etc;

the post holder could also be used to develop other initiatives such as an intranet to aid internal communications for officers and members, and other e-communication projects such as the recent bid for Invest to Save budget funds to consult electronically with young people and community groups.

- Disadvantages
  This would require a recurring annual cost.

- Cost: £18,430 pa recurring (scale five)
  (nb: this would be subject to a detailed job description and grading assessment).

- Maintain only current level of resource
  - If there are no new resources committed to developing the web site the proposed developments highlighted above are unlikely to be achievable.

5. Other local authorities

5. 1 A brief and small sample of other authorities shows that there is no one standard practice, some authorities buy in external resources, some have their own in house, others use a mix of both, and there is a wide variation in resource allocation.

It seems to be however a consistent message that all sites are moving towards a more interactive level, customer friendly level and preparing to be used as the front end for online services.

5.2 Other sites which have been variously developed and can be looked at for information include:

www.newcastle.gov.uk
www.wycombe.gov.uk
www.tandridge.gov.uk
www.eastbourne.gov.uk
www.leeds.gov.uk
www.tameside.gov.uk

6. Priority issues

There are a number of pressing issues which should be viewed as priorities, regardless of which option is chosen.

It is recommended that the Head of Communications working with the Head of IT takes the following action to address these issues:

- Review of the web site guidelines (appendix 3) which were produced when the web site was originally being developed, to incorporate more recent guidelines and good practice for local authority web sites
- An audit and review of all council service sites to clarify how corporate identity should be used on all and how they link into the corporate site
- Setting up of an officer group with representatives from all departments who can take ownership of departmental pages and have responsibility for checking that information is up to date and input into the development of the site.

2. CONSULTATION

2.1 Consultation to Date.
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee has given initial consideration to the development of the web site, e government, and ISB proposals at the meeting on 6th December.

2.2 Consultation proposed.
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee

3. STAFFING/RESOURCES COMMENTS

The Head of Personnel Services comments that the proposals within this report contain an option which would increase the establishment of the council by one post. This post would be subject to confirmation of grading and job description through the council's established employment procedures.

4. CITY TREASURER'S COMMENTS

There is no established budget for this proposal and any financial implications would need to be considered as part of the current budget bids, reported separately on this agenda.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

n/a

6. CORPORATE COMMENTS

n/a

7. RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

Risk minimisation would be achieved through either a comprehensive project specification and/ or adoption of the council's standard recruitment and employment practices (depending on the preferred options).

There is a real risk that without any action being taken the council's current web site will become obselete and hinder the council's ability to meet government set targets for on line services.

8. EQUALITY ISSUES
N/a

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS
N/a

10. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS
N/a

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is recommended that the Head of Communications working with the Head of IT are approved to take the following actions to address a number of issues:

- Review of the web site guidelines (appendix 3) which were produced when the web site was originally being developed, to incorporate more recent guidelines and good practice for local authority web sites
- An audit and review of all council service sites to clarify how corporate identity should be used on all and how they link into the corporate site
- Setting up of an officer group with representatives from all departments who can take ownership of departmental pages and have responsibility for checking that information is up to date and input into the development of the site.

11.2 It is recommended that the Executive indicates its preference in the future development for the web site from the options below:

- In partnership eg through the Local Strategic Partnership
- External procurement
- In-house resource
- Maintain current level of resource.

And determines whether or not to support the budget bid elsewhere on this agenda.

Default Report
## Carlisle City Council Q1/2001

02/01/2001 00:00:00 - 04/01/2001 23:59:59   Tuesday October 30, 2001 - 15:50:40

General Statistics   Help 🛈

The Visits graph displays the overall number of visits to your Web site. The General Statistics table provides an overview of the activity for your Web site during the specified time frame.

Visits

Thu 02/01/2001 - Sun 04/01/2001 (12 Week Scale)
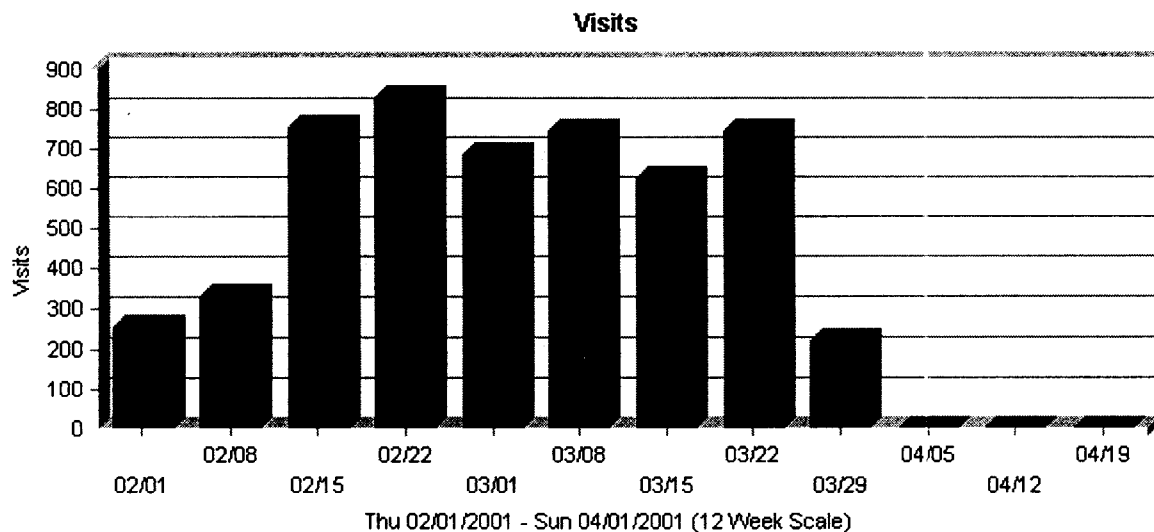
General Statistics

Hits	Entire Site (Successful)	194,096
	Average Per Day	3,234
	Home Page	3,237
Page Views	Page Views (Impressions)	21,108
	Average Per Day	351
	Document Views	21,081
Visits	Visits	5,208
	Average Per Day	86
	Average Visit Length	00:06:43
	Median Visit Length	00:02:16
	International Visits	41.24%
	Visits of Unknown Origin	16.68%
	Visits from United States	42.06%
Visitors	Unique Visitors	2,800
	Visitors Who Visited Once	2,148
	Visitors Who Visited More Than Once	652

10.

Default Report
Carlisle City Council Q2/2001

04/01/2001 00:00:00 - 07/01/2001   Tuesday October 30, 2001 -
23:59:59   15:36:43

General Statistics   Help ❸

The Visits graph displays the overall number of visits to your Web site.
The General Statistics table provides an overview of the activity for
your Web site during the specified time frame.

Visits

Sun 04/01/2001 - Sun 07/01/2001 (1 Quarter Scale)
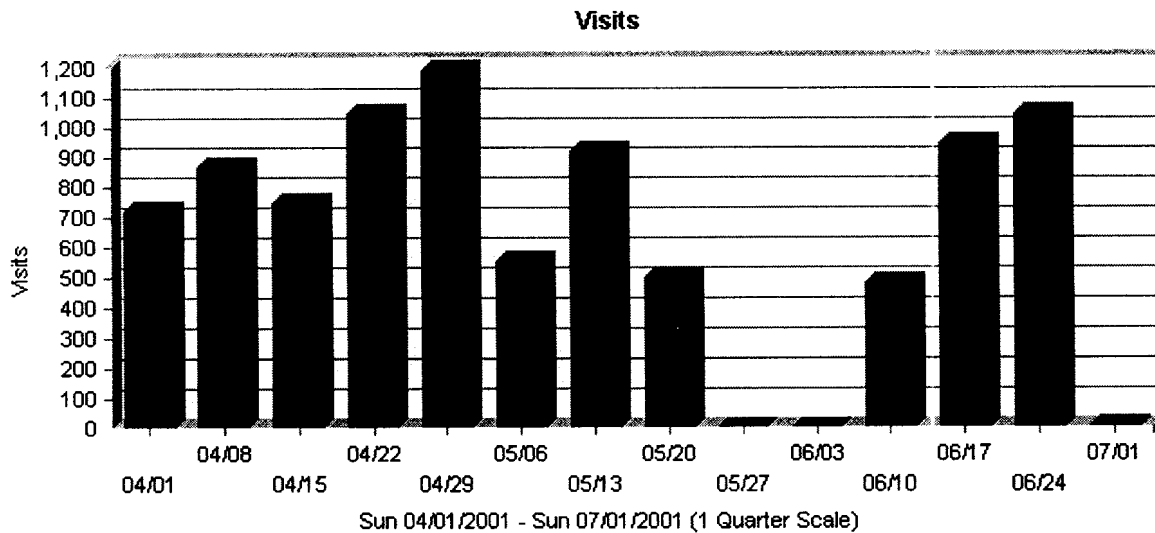
General Statistics

Hits	Entire Site (Successful)	316,800
	Average Per Day	3,443
	Home Page	4,431
Page Views	Page Views (Impressions)	52,304
	Average Per Day	568
	Document Views	52,295
Visits	Visits	9,073
	Average Per Day	98
	Average Visit Length	00:09:55
	Median Visit Length	00:00:17
	International Visits	33.88%
	Visits of Unknown Origin	19.64%
	Visits from United States	46.47%
Visitors	Unique Visitors	4,464
	Visitors Who Visited Once	3,628
	Visitors Who Visited More Than Once	836

WEBTRENDS

Default Report
Carlisle City Council Q3/2001

07/01/2001 00:00:00 - 10/01/2001   Tuesday October 30, 2001 -
23:59:59   15:46:06

General Statistics   Help ❓

The Visits graph displays the overall number of visits to your Web site.
The General Statistics table provides an overview of the activity for
your Web site during the specified time frame.

Visits

Sun 07/01/2001 - Mon 10/01/2001 (1 Quarter Scale)
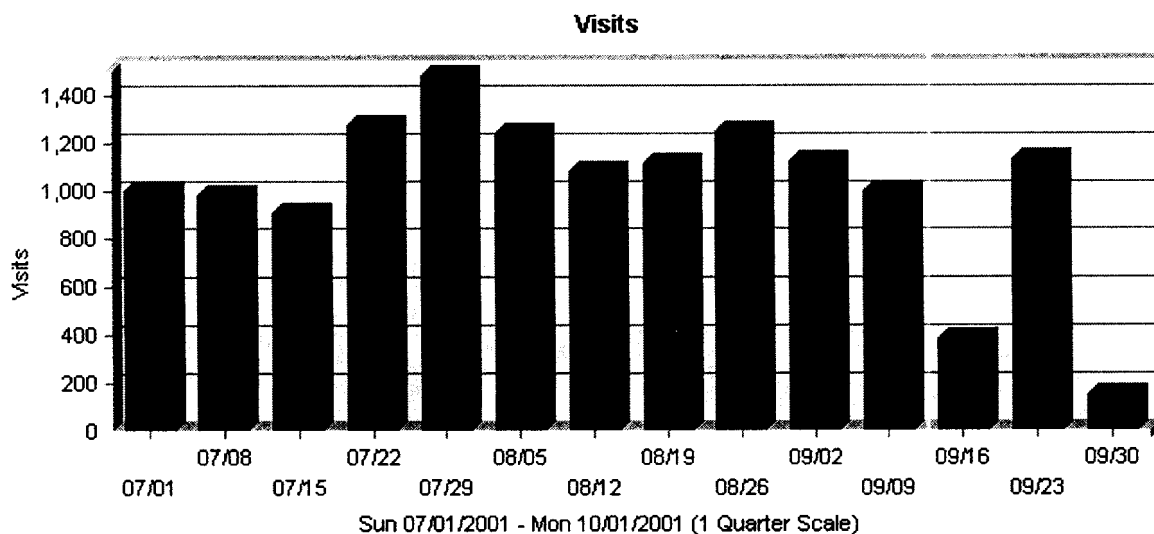
General Statistics

Hits	Entire Site (Successful)	503,631
	Average Per Day	5,415
	Home Page	6,151
Page Views	Page Views (Impressions)	82,650
	Average Per Day	888
	Document Views	82,641
Visits	Visits	14,179
	Average Per Day	152
	Average Visit Length	00:10:53
	Median Visit Length	00:02:26
	International Visits	35.83%
	Visits of Unknown Origin	14.95%
	Visits from United States	49.2%
Visitors	Unique Visitors	6,749
	Visitors Who Visited Once	5,569
	Visitors Who Visited More Than Once	1,180

12.

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Newcastle
City Council

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⊡Quick List

[Select Item ▾]

| Features |

Thursday December 06, 2001			
☁	Cloudy	Max	Min
		06	06

Welcome to the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, the regional capital of the north east of England and to the official web site of Newcastle City Council. We've categorised this site by information and services that relate to the council, our residents, our visitors, businesses and news items. The navigation bar at the top of the screen will enable you to access the information. We've also placed a quick list at the left hand side of the screen which will take you directly to the service you require.

Latest Additions to Site

Christmas Message
Message to the people of Newcastle from The Lord Mayor.
click here .

Commedia Millennium Awards
The launch of a major national funding scheme that enables local voices to be heard. People living in the North East are being offered the opportunity to make a web site or radio or TV programme about an issue that effects them and their community. click here for more information.

Global Forum - Rt. Hon Nick Brown MP
The Rt. Hon Nick Brown, Minister of State for Work, praises Newcastle City Council's website, click here.

If you want to see, and hear, Nick Brown's speech from the Global Forum 2001, hosted at Newcastle City Council, click here.

Please note : you will need Realplayer to view these mediaclips [http://www.real.com] other Newcastle city council media can be found here

Members Allowances - Report of the Remuneration Panel
In accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 all Councils have to set up an independent panel to advise them on matters relating to Member's Allowances. Any recommendations from the Panel must be published. The attached report will be considered by the City Council meeting on 3 October at 6:00 pm.
Go to this page
The Council agreed a revised scheme of members allowances which is attached
Go to this page

Lifelong Learning
One small step... That's all it takes and you could find yourself on course for a whole new career, learn how to channel your creative talents or pick up on where you left off when you said goodbye to school all those years ago.
Go to this page

NECASS
The North East Consortium for Asylum Support Services- NECASS is a consortium of all local authorities plus other statutory agencies and voluntary organisations in the North East.
Go to this page

Housing Strategy
Welcome to the City of Newcastle's Housing Strategy for 2001. Here we set out the role housing plays in a successful city, dividing our plans into three themes: City, Homes and People.

Features logos:
- New Years Eve 2001 Web Site
- CITY CENTRE MAP DOWNLOAD NOW
- Tyne Tunnel WEBCAMS
- city eye
- Live Internet Meetings
- Jobs On-Line
- ENVIROcall 0191 . 274 4000

13 .

Text only
link

Time: 12:27 PM on Mon 10th Dec 2001
Website Last Updated: 10:43 AM on Mon 10th Dec
2001

A Z 👀

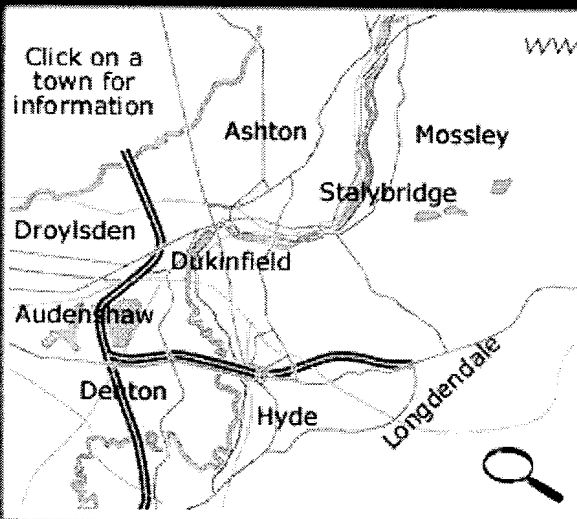| What's New | Online Forms | Jobs with Tameside | Life Events | District Assemblies |

Credit Card Payments

Education

Libraries & Leisure

Know your councillor

Where are we?

Click on a town for information

www. **Tameside** .gov.uk

Ashton   Mossley

Stalybridge

Droylsden

Dukinfield

Audenshaw

Denton

Hyde

Longdendale

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Text version of scrolling news

A Beacon & Pathfinder Council

Beacon Council

| e-tameside | F.A.Q | Have your say | Business | The council @ work |

14.

Life Events

We've designed a series of webpages based on Life Events - from birth to death. Not all are live at the moment but are currently in development.
We hope you find these pages helpful

Birth · Starting School · Start College · Leave School/College · Adoption & Fostering · Victim of Crime · Starting a Business · Becoming Disabled · Getting a Job · Adult Learning · Retirement · Death & Bereavement · Moving Home · Getting Married · Redundancy · Start a Family · Single Parent · Long Term Care · Divorce

15 .
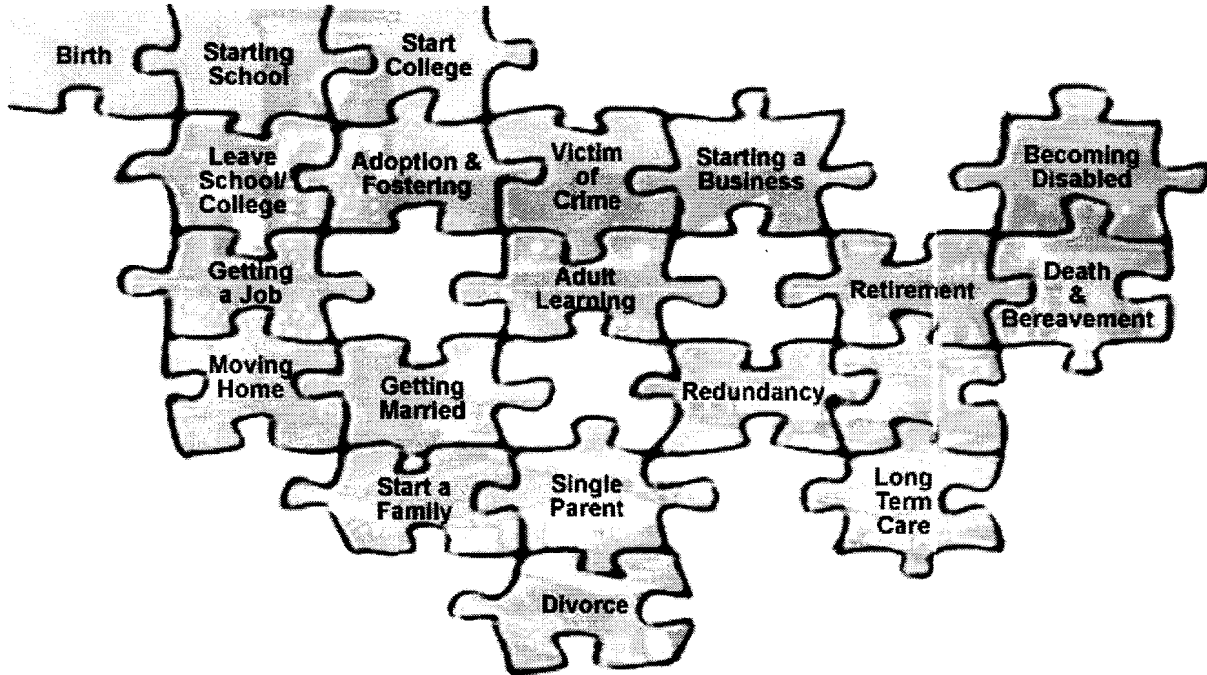
Carlisle City Council   Website guidelines

Introduction
This has been produced to set out guidelines for content and format of Carlisle's web site and to clarify responsibilities and roles in developing and maintaining the site. It has been developed in accordance with central government's *Framework policy and guidelines for the use, management and design of public sector websites*, and taking into account the Modernising Government White Paper.

As the web site and e government develop, the guidelines will need to be reviewed and revised as appropriate to include further issues which will become apparent as the site is developed.

Organisational issues
It is vital that e communication is accepted as an additional vehicle for communication and interaction with citizens and stakeholders, it is now a mainstream method rather than an exception and maintaining a high quality, informative, up to date web site is part of the wider communications process.

The web site should reflect openness and responsiveness and encourage joined up services so that users can find the information or services they want as quickly and easily as possible.

It is essential that all departments view the website as an integral part of the organisation and consider how they can use the internet to communicate with different audiences.

Maintenance and management
While the responsibility for constructing and maintaining the website lies ultimately with the Communications Unit, it is recommended that each department or unit has one nominated key officer with responsibility for liasing with the Communications Unit to ensure that all information is up to date and accurate. The initial site to be launched later this year is a basic site which will be under constant review and revision to ensure that it is developed and improved.

The Communications Unit working with the IT department will regularly collate and provide statistical reports to help inform the development of the web site. This data will include:
- Number of hits
- Most frequently visited pages
- Least frequently visited pages
- Successful requests
- Unsuccessful requests
- Top entry pages
- Top referring sites
- Page impressions
- Unique visits.

In addition the Communications Unit working with the Policy Unit will collect data from users via the Citizens Panel, and from other groups, to gain feedback on the web site, user opinions and potential for developments and improvements.

16.

Content

Government guidelines recommend that all public sector organisations should provide in easily accessible form on the Internet:

- Organisation structure
- Press notices
- Consultation documents
- Membership and terms of reference of advisory groups
- Postal address, fax and telephone number
- Research reports and statistical information
- Responsibilities, aims and objectives of units and divisions
- Forms published by the department, and guidance for their completion
- Telephone numbers or e mail addresses (see also 'contacts') for further information on specific services
- Recruitment policies, procedures and information.

Homepages should include:

- Link to www.open.gov.uk
- Organisation name and logo
- Email contact
- Links to:
     Organisation statement of purpose
     Organisation structure
     Search facilities
     FAQ
     Help facility
     What's new section
     Contact addresses, postal and e mail
     Privacy policy statement
     Complaints procedure
     Copyright disclaimer
     Feedback page.

- Contact details: a full postal address must be included as well as an e mail address. Personal e mail addresses must not be used, alternatively generic addresses can be used (eg comms@carlisle-city.gov.uk rather than SharonM@carlisle-city.gov.uk) As well as adhering to good practice, this enables the addresses to remain relevant even after personnel changes.

- Good practice also dictates that accurate, correct and current information must be provided.   This need for attention to the accuracy and timeliness of information will increase as the level of interactivity of the site increases.

- Guidelines for forms on the web site:
     Forms to down load must be accurate, correct and current; must be printable on standard black and white printers; must be economical to print (no background colours).
     When providing online forms:
     The forms must be accurate, correct and current and be transparent.
     Online help must be available.
     Security levels must be adequate to protect customer privacy
     Clear statement about procedures for handling personal data must be available.
     It must be clear to the user that the information has been sent successfully
     It must be clear to the user whether or not a response will be sent.

If a response is to be sent to the user, it must be stated when the response can be expected.

- As a form of publicity, the local authority web site will be governed by the Government's rules on publicity produced by local authorities. A comprehensive guide to these rules (*The right side of the law, published by the Local Government Information Unit*) is held in the Communications Unit.

Accessibility

Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for a service provider to treat disabled people less favourably for a reason related to their disability. Service providers must also consider making reasonable adjustments to the way that they deliver their services where disabled people find these impossible or unreasonably difficult to access. Government policy is to encourage all public sector organisations to make their services as accessible to disabled people as is reasonably possible. In addition to compliance with the DDA is vital that all potential users of government web services are able to access sites.

Basic guidelines to encourage inclusive access include recommendations regarding:
- Text – must be a contrasting colour to the background; must not flash, but be static at all times
- Fonts – size must always be specified; only commonly available fonts can be specified, eg Arial, Helvetica, Times New Roman; Sans Serif Fonts are recommended for body text; all caps and over use of italics should be avoided;
- Tables – can cause difficulties and where possible should be avoided – where this is unreasonable, there must be some consideration of how sites perform with Access Technology.

More comprehensive information on accessibility guidelines and good practice is held in the Communications Unit.

Links

Reciprocal links should be set up with Tullie House*, Sands Centre, Carlisle Works*, Historic Carlisle and Irish Gate Bridge sites when the city site is launched (*sites are currently unavailable). It is recommended that for the time being links are limited to other public sector sites. This needs to be reviewed and guidelines for reciprocal links with, for example, private sector businesses, retail or community partners need to be addressed.

November 2000   S McKee

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