# Cambridge City Council

## Web Strategy

2018 – 2021

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## 1.0 Purpose of the web strategy

Cambridge City Council's websites, social media sites, and intranet are key access channels for our external and internal customers. Not only do they provide access to services and information quickly and at a time and place convenient to the customer, but they also allow the council to deliver services more cost effectively.

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that there is a clear vision for the development and governance of the council's web presence over the next 3 years. The primary focus of this strategy and vision is the council's main customer facing (corporate) website (www.cambridge.gov.uk) but we also have an internal intranet which houses information, links, documents and guidance for employees.

The strategy will also cover the governance and support of our satellite sites, third party sites, and social media sites. These are part of the council's overall web presence, so although they may be detailed in the strategies of the services that require them, it is pertinent to reference them here.

## 2.0 Vision – putting the customer at the centre

Our strategy is to put the customer at the centre of what we do. By continuing to develop and organise our websites around the needs and wants of our customers and by fully utilising our digital channels, we will be able to provide improved access to services and information. Our customers include:

- Residents
- Local businesses
- Visitors
- Staff and councillors
- Partner organisations, media and other stakeholders

Our objectives for the main corporate website are that:

- It will be a **robust, accessible and customer-focussed** way of doing business with the council, capable of carrying out the key transactions our customers need.

- It will be **accessible on mobile and tablet devices**, as well as desktop, enabling customers to access information and services at a time and in a manner most convenient for them.

- It will offer a **quick and easy way of understanding what services the council provides**, how they are run, how much they cost, how well they are performing, and how decisions are made about them.

- It will encourage citizens of Cambridge to **interact with the council online**, easily allowing them to shape and inform how and when services are delivered.

- It will be a tool for **consulting with residents in the decision-making process**, while enabling the council to explain its resulting responses.

- It will be **easy to use and understand**, meeting the needs of all of our customers irrespective of age, gender, disability, ethnic origin, race, religion, geographical location or educational level.

- It will act as a **gateway to other key services and sites** the customers need, such as transactional processes.

- It must **adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG) 2.0 AA standard, which covers a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible.

We have similar objectives for our intranet: that it is easy to use, accessible, and provides tools to do more business online where not currently possible, but that may become required as part of the council's digital strategy.

# 3.0 Where we are now

## 3.1 Main council website

Our main website (www.cambridge.gov.uk) is targeted at all residents, visitors and businesses in the city, with an average of 120,000 sessions per month (full customer interactions with the site, rather than just page visits).

The website's main functions are:

- **Dissemination of information**: e.g. details of services, advice on resolving issues, press releases, consultations, promotion of events, links to meetings and agendas;
- **To give access to transactional services:** e.g. self-serve forms, online payments, planning applications, environmental reporting, revenues and benefits, and read access to back-office data;
- **To complement other access channels:** providing contact details and pointing customers to other internal access channels (e.g. customer services) or external resources (e.g. GOV.uk or a different council).

### 3.1.1 Content

The current site structure highlights popular tasks and uses icons for navigation. Top tasks can be monitored and menus easily changed through the CMS to reflect changes in behaviour if necessary.

### 3.1.2 Management, Maintenance and Governance

Responsibility for the website rests with the Web Team, which consists of the Digital and Web Manager and Web Officer. This team sits within Corporate Marketing & Communications, within Corporate Strategy.

Technical support and enhancements to the website and content management system are provided by the 3C ICT Digital Team.

The web team produce and manage content with services, and undertake routine maintenance and housekeeping, as well as taking a strategic overview of external web provision.

Strategic development of the council's web presence is governed by the Digital Programme Board. This is chaired by the Head of Corporate Strategy and incorporates senior representation from 3C ICT and a selection of council services.

## 3.2 Staff Intranet – CityNet

The council's intranet was branded as CityNet when rebuilt in 2013. Its main functions are:

- **Dissemination of information:** e.g. publishing details of services, news, staff notices, guidance and policies, staff details, articles, events, groups
- **To give access to self-service:** e.g. links to e-learning, MyView, HR forms
- **To complement other access channels:** to point customers to other access channels where needed, e.g. ICT or Business Support

## 3.3 Third party and satellite sites

The main website provides access to a number of third party and transactional sites/systems procured to do a specific job and that often give customers the choice to self-serve. We also have satellite websites that are targeted towards specific groups, or have a commercial interest.

Our third party sites and systems include, for example, e-revenues and e-benefits, Capita payments, self-serve forms, a planning portal (Public Access), and modern.gov.

Our satellite sites include Bereavement Services, Vehicle Services, MOTs and Repairs, and Local Nature Reserves.

These sites and their content are managed by the services that require them, with the exception of self-serve forms where the web team are responsible for drafting content for these with the services. The web team also provide advice and support on these sites when it comes to functionality, integration, and look and feel.

A full list of these sites with notes on who is responsible for them can be found in the appendix of this document.

## 3.4 Social Media

The council has Twitter, Facebook and YouTube accounts.

Some services have their own social media accounts where it is suitable, such as ChYpPS, but the main council accounts are used to give information from across the council and when appropriate, from external resources.

### 3.4.1 Governance and content

The management of our social media accounts rests with the Corporate Marketing and Communications team, who are responsible for posting news, events and announcements, and for responding to corporate queries, as well as Customer Services who respond to individuals' service queries or complaints. The web team manage access to these accounts, and provide training and guidance for use where needed, as well as posting updates when necessary.

Individuals from services may post on corporate accounts, and currently 25 have access to the corporate Facebook account and 38 to the corporate Twitter. Where services have their own accounts, they are responsible for their content, although the corporate marketing team and web team will help with the setup and management of accounts, including providing guidance on what content is appropriate as per our social media guidance.

# 4.0 Where we need to be

## 4.1 Providing web services that customers want

The council's stance on digital, as per the 2018 Digital Strategy, requires an increasing range of online self-service facilities to encourage channel shift. The current public website provides access to a number of these, but further work is required to enable, encourage and make it easier for residents to use online services. This will result in efficiency savings, and increase customer satisfaction.

It also calls for greater digital inclusion, giving more customers an online experience that is quick, easy and hassle free, not being deterred by inaccessibility. Meeting the high expectations of our customers through modern digital processes is crucial, and improving the council's overall web presence is essential to meet our objectives.

Additionally, good practice suggests that the main website should be reviewed and updated regularly to take advantage of advances in technology and web design. With this in mind, we will be taking an agile and iterative approach to the development of the main website, intranet, and ongoing projects that result from our Digital Strategy.

Some key improvement themes for all our online services are:

### 4.1.1 High quality content

Content needs to remain accurate, up-to-date, relevant and accessible (to WCAG 2.0 AA standard), and written according to our content service standards. Social posts should continue to be written according to the social media policy, while taking advantage of multimedia to increase engagement.

Customers should be able to sign up to receive email alerts for various content streams, via a simple subscription service. Customers should also be able to easily unsubscribe from any newsletters.

The website should provide content in a number of formats, utilising existing and emerging technologies, while encouraging customers to follow our social media accounts. When used appropriately, images, video, infographics, data visualisation and animation can communicate information more succinctly and reach a wider audience than written copy alone.

### 4.1.2 Appropriate technical infrastructure

The technical infrastructure must be reliable, resilient, robust and secure, with sufficient capacity to meet current and future needs. Data must be backed up regularly and system downtime minimised, particularly as more self-service applications are deployed online. Storage of our data must be secure and in line with legislation such as the General Data Protection Regulation and our own data protection policies and procedures.

E-commerce solutions must be secure when storing, transmitting or processing credit card details and other personal data and this data must be transferred as encrypted via Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) and should meet the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).

We will monitor the performance and resilience of our websites and publish this information under our transparency agenda.

### 4.1.3 A platform for customers to have their say

There is significant potential for the council to actively engage communities to have their say on the range of services it provides.

In addition to inviting customers to comment on consultations and planning applications, or encouraging them to attend committee meetings and engage with us via social media, there is potential for any of our sites to use other collaborative technologies such as blogs, chat, forums, votes, and open commenting, provided appropriate guidelines are provided, followed and maintained (and there is staff capacity to provide regular and timely content and to respond to customer contacts promptly).

### 4.1.4 Complying with legislation, accessibility and web standards

Policies and procedures will be reviewed in respect of legislation that may impact the web. There will be clear differentiation between official council information and information provided by third parties. We will conform to Government standards and develop according to web, accessibility and security standards and adopt industry best practice.

### 4.1.5 Transactional

In order to meet our customer and business needs we need to provide more of our services online. Web transactions are more economical than more traditional access channels, (such as telephone and face-to-face) when fully automated, end-to-end.

Transactional services include:

- Reporting issues
- Requesting a service
- Booking an appointment
- Viewing account information (council tax, housing benefit)
- Applying for something (planning permission, benefit claim)
- Tracking all of the above
- Making a payment

Some of these services are already available from existing back-office systems, or will be implemented within a new customer portal solution.

Service managers should design their services specifically for the web, whilst also providing services via traditional access channels where necessary. This digital-by-design approach will allow us to drive more transactions online.

**4.1.6 Transparency and public access to data**

As part of the Government drive for councils to be more open and transparent, we need to publish data held within our back office systems, providing it is relevant to the public, and within legal, technical and resource constraints.

This data must be in a format that is 'machine-readable' so it can be used to build websites and applications, while also being human readable so it can be understood by the public. We will work with colleagues in the County Council and other agencies to develop our open data capacity and to utilise Cambs Insight for sharing our data more widely and accessibly.

While the council recognises this need for transparency, we also have a responsibility to ensure key information is easily found and customer focused. We must be careful to strike this balance when choosing what should be published on the website.

**4.1.7 Customer authentication and personalisation**

Key to many of the more complex transactional processes being delivered over the web is customer authentication, which will allow the council to reliably verify the identity of the customer when accessing services.

The type and level of authentication required by each service will differ according to the specific business requirements.

An additional benefit of authenticating customers is the opportunity for personalisation, where we would have the ability to offer content that is tailored to the individual customer,

for example, planning applications, when bins will be collected and news about their locality. This can also be achieved with a website level user account offering the customer the ability to customise the homepage content, and subscribe to or search for specific location-based content automatically.

**4.1.8 Third party and satellite sites**

These sites and systems now fall under the remit of the ICT Strategy and Digital Strategy, which were produced in 2017/18. It these strategies, the need for strict procurement standards and design principles are detailed and as a result, new systems must:

- Favour common API, web standards and open API vendors
- Be scalable
- Be sustainable
- Be designed for the user
- Have actively managed user interface and seamless customer experience
- Be data driven
- Be collaborative

The Digital Strategy is available on our website.

These strategies will ensure that the sites are accessible, that the user journey between sites is streamlined and simple, and that our overall digital presence is trusted by customers. Where possible, these sites will be integrated fully with the website.

Strategic Leadership Team has delegated to the Digital Programme Board responsibility for gatekeeping the creation of new satellite websites. This is intended to control the total costs and complexity of the Council's online hosting arrangements.

# 5.0 Improving our web services

The above requirements describe what is needed to deliver information, to allow customers to interact and transact with us, and allow us as a council to be compliant with the regulations and standards that ensure information is open to everyone.

Below we detail short, medium and long term steps that need to be taken through the life of this strategy to:

1. Identify more specifically what our customers need and want from our websites, for instance through user-testing;
2. Ensure we continue to meet the standards and regulations required of a customer facing government website;
3. Ensure we continue to meet the needs of all of our customers by making our sites accessible and usable;
4. Take advantage of current and new technologies that will allow customers to transact more readily online;
5. Utilise new and engaging ways of communicating with our customers;
6. Make our content relevant, understandable and open, and accessed through intuitive navigation.

## 5.1 Short Term: to 12 months

### 5.1.1 Relationship with 3C ICT and new main website

In August 2018, we will be releasing a new version of our main website under our new relationship with 3C ICT as our website developer. There are a number of benefits of this relationship, including bringing the three partner councils in line in terms of the technology used, which will allow expertise and development work to be shared.

The website is being rebuilt in the preferred CMS, which is Umbraco. We will use this opportunity to make improvements to user journeys, and refresh the design.

Following the website launch, we will obtain customer feedback to inform further improvements, and decide whether we need to use a professional design service to add polish or make changes.

### 5.1.2 Content centralisation

The web team have centralised our content management process. This will have numerous benefits, such as increased consistency across our sites, time given back to services, and the assurance that content will be up to date, easy to find and relevant as we will be able to take a holistic approach content management.

Throughout 2018, the web team will audit different sections of content, rewriting what is necessary with the service in question. We will also respond to feedback on the process and make changes to this when appropriate.

We will continue to ensure our content is accessible, and with a reading age of no higher than 15.

We will be using an online system to manage content change requests, which will allow us to produce stats on requests, and prioritise requests according to their urgency and the need of the service.

### 5.1.3 Plans for new Intranet

From August 2018, we will begin planning what changes are needed for the Intranet. This will involve revisiting 2017 survey responses from staff, but also gaining further insight from individuals on what we as a council expect the intranet to do.

By the end of 2018, we should have an implementation plan for CityNet and a timeline for the changes, if not a solution in place.

### 5.1.4 New self-serve forms

A new self-serve forms package has been procured, IEG4 (August 2017) and work has been undertaken by the web team to style and brand the software as far as possible, as well as creating the initial set of forms. From June 2018, we will undertake any ongoing maintenance, assisting the customer service team in the transition period, and create new forms as they are requested by services.

### 5.1.5 Maintenance and website development

The web team will work with our website developer and services to implement updates and changes to the current website where necessary, and fix any issues that may arise in the weeks after the release of the new website.

We will undertake initial customer feedback on the new website, and plan any improvements necessary based on this feedback. We will also use this information to research new features or tools that would improve customer experience.

We will continue to manage and support our social media accounts, offering advice and guidance with regards to any changes or updates from which those accounts may benefit.

## 5.2 Medium Term (12 – 24 months)

During this time, we will continue to engage with the 3C ICT Digital Team utilising any user testing, research and feedback from services to ensure that the new website continues to meet requirements. We will be working on implementing new features, while improving user journeys, accessibility and content, and working with our partners to improve services across the county.

Investigations into (and implementation of) new and emerging technologies and functionality identified in the Digital and core ICT strategies will be ongoing during this time, including but not limited to:

**Authentication** – Potential implementation of an overarching customer portal that could be integrated with and sit on top of a number of our transactional processes. This would be a reliable and robust way of identifying customers and delivering self-service applications.

**Personalisation & better data** – We will analyse data from various sources to inform decisions about for example, new website features, digital products, or tools that will improve the customer experience, encourage channel shift, or make our services more accessible.

**Mobile access/devices** - Our analytics have shown that more customers are using mobile devices to access our main customer website, therefore our new website will be full responsive to ensure the experience is as good as it can be, encouraging more customers to transact online.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – Research shows that more local councils are experimenting with AI, such as chat bots and cognitive agents, to deliver services and reduce the pressure on face to face and telephone transactions. There is also potential to use live translation services, such as Skype Translation, to make phone interactions easier and quicker for non-English speakers.

**Digital Inclusion** – We will look at how the website can be used to include customers socially online and encourage them to transact online, and at what can be done to make all these processes as intuitive as possible.

**Multimedia communication** – As well as the work being done currently to increase our use of different media formats to communicate, there is a need for ongoing review of new and improved formats to best get messages and information across to customers, including social media.

## 5.3 Long term (24 months plus)

We will continue to monitor and maintain the new website (and Intranet), identifying improvements, new features, better integrations and improved processes, while working with our partners to make resource and cost savings where possible.

We will be working in an agile away with 3C ICT which will allow us develop our sites making iterative developments, ensuring they are always robust and always meeting customer needs.

We will review this strategy regularly, ensuring that it is in line with the Digital Strategy and ICT Strategy to deliver long term goals.

## 5.4 Standards

We have adopted and enforced a variety of WCAG and UK Government recommended standards. We will continue to monitor revisions to these standards and consider new proposals if they will:

- Improve the interoperability of our website and resources with other technologies (existing and emerging)
- Simplify or increase the efficiency of our publishing processes
- Assist us in meeting legislative requirements
- Be of benefit to us and customers

## 5.5 Governance

Responsibility for the council's main website and intranet will remain with the web team. They will also continue to offer help, and input valuable advice and expertise in the procurement or update of our third party sites, satellite sites, and social media sites.

The web team will also be responsible for the content provision and management on the website, and will explore whether a centralised model will also work for the Intranet.

The Digital Programme Board, with the newly established ICT Programme Board, will continue to push forward the enabling of more online services, and improvement of existing digital products and processes, to make the website more transactional.

# 6.0 Document Control

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