Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Implementation of content management on council website
Date:	21 June, 2013
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Eamon Deeny, Head of Corporate Communications Paul Gribben, Head of ISB

1	**Relevant Background Information**
	Belfast City Council's website is currently undergoing a major revamp both in terms of its appearance and functionality (Appendix 1). The council's current site was launched in 2006. In the last seven years, the major changes in technology and communication have been; 1. how people **access web information** has moved from PC based to Smartphones and tablets (currently over a third of visitors to www.belfastcity.gov.uk is mobile traffic), 2. the emergence and proliferation of **social media and email marketing**; 3. the ability to carry out **online/mobile transactions;** and 4. the integration of **video** (online and offline) as part of an overall communications strategy

2	**Key Issues**

2.1	1. **www.belfastcity.gov.uk**
	   The council website attracts an average unique visitor figure of 132,000 every month. This is highly significant in terms of communications, engagement, customer care and transacting business.
	   Mobile traffic (those using Smartphones and tablets) makes up over a third of visitors to the council site. As this is set to continue to rise, the main aim of the website project is to develop a mobile responsive site, to ensure our customers can easily access our information and services, regardless of whether they are using a PC or a mobile device.
	
	   ISB has engaged C2 Software to implement the ActivEdition Content Management System (CMS). Work has been carried out to review all of our web content with the aim of producing a more customer focused site.

We are developing the site following a user-centred design approach. This means that design decisions are taken based on objective data about user behaviour, focussing on the most commonly accessed and sought after content and services.

The quality of local authority websites are measured by SOCITM's Better Connected annual website review. In the most recent review Belfast City Council gained a three star ranking (4 is the highest ranking), placing it top when measured against our local council neighbours. Local authority sites are now being assessed on whether they are mobile sites or not and this will be key to attaining a top ranked website.

2. **Social media and email marketing**
Belfast City Council is in the top five local authorities in the UK for its following on social media, according to the Better Connected Report. We are currently in a two-way conversation with over 33,000 fans and followers (equivalent to a quarter of all households in Belfast) on a daily basis. Social media is currently integrated into the website and further work will look at the integration with the council's webcasting service. We will continue to look at how we use social media in a customer service environment, as many enquiries and calls for service now come through this medium.

Corporate Communications currently sends out 150,000 targeted emails via email marketing every month to subscribers to updates from, for example, Belfast Waterfront and events. This service offers evaluation on opening rates and reduces the amount of printed material.

3. **Online transactions**
Currently visitors to the site have access to a range of online transactions, from making an enquiry to buying a dog licence. The new site will include additional features and we are currently working on, the ability to:

- pay a range of enforcements online;
- view property certificates online; and
- book and pay for a range of leisure activities.

It will also introduce the new corporate approach to complaints, compliments and comments;

4. **Mobile transactions**
As we have explained the increasing use of mobile technology has driven the need to establish an improved user experience on smartphones and tablets, so in parallel to improving access to information, the redevelopment of our website will see us develop our online services in a mobile responsive way. The 'aim is to have all services delivered on our website available in a mobile format. Our initial focus has been on configuring the 'MyBelfast' app with services that link right through to the back office and an anticipated upgrade to the user interface of this app will allow us to deliver an improved experience in the near future.

5. **Video**
How people consume information has changed, highlighted by the fact that four billion videos are watched every day globally on YouTube.

We set up a YouTube channel in 2009 and have received 165,337 views of all our videos. We have over 80 corporate videos hosted on our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/belfastcitycouncil) covering services, campaigns and events.

Corporate Communications has procured video and editing equipment and some staff will be receiving training on its use to increase the potential of producing video news releases and videos to inform staff of council and local government development in-house in a cost effective way.

However, we will still need to make professionally made corporate videos from time to time in relation to major events and announcements, and we will explore how this best can be managed through a call-off contract with video companies along the same basis that we deploy with photography.

This will give chairs of committees and civic dignitaries the opportunity to get key council messages across using this format.

Conclusion

The new mobile enabled website is on schedule to go live on 31 July. This date is only the beginning of our approach to enhancing our communications - our website will give us the platform to develop this further.

We must ensure that we keep abreast of developments and evolve the website in line with new developments and our customers' expectations.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	A project team from ISB and Corporate Communications are leading on the delivery of our new mobile responsive website and resources from these two services will work on an intensive content migration exercise before the new site is launched.
3.2	An on-going programme of delivering online and mobile enabled services will continue following the launch of the new website.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	Equality and good relations implications will have to considered, particularly in relation to the visually impaired.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note • The development in technologies which have changed the communications landscape in the last seven years. • The efforts made to ensure our communications are in line with our

	customers' expectations.
	• The key date of the 31st July when our new mobile responsive website will be launched.

6	Decision Tracking
Eamon Deeny	

7	Key to Abbreviations
SOCITM – Society of IT Managers	

8	Documents Attached
None	