

# Briefing Note



**Subject:** Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to Review the New Website

**Submitted to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 30 November 2016

**Prepared by:** Michael Courts, Corporate and Democratic Services Officer

---

## Introduction

1. A key aspect of the council's organisational transformation programme is to make an increased number of its services available online.
2. As part of their work programme for 2015/16, a group of overview and scrutiny members had undertaken a review of digital inclusion. The review had examined the barriers which prevent people from accessing services online. Members also considered examples of good practice from a range of agencies in overcoming these barriers and encourage take-up of online services. A management response to the review was adopted by Cabinet on 5 September 2016.
3. At its annual meeting on 26 July 2016, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to continue to monitor digital inclusion by forming a task and finish group to review the council's new website.

## Background

4. The Customer First Communications Champion, Transformation and ICT teams had carried out a comprehensive review of the content and layout of the council's website.
5. The structure of the new website aims to mirror face to face interactions, to ensure customer journeys are as streamlined as possible. The layout had also been designed to ensure the website was easily accessible across a range of devices, including computers, tablets and smart phones.
6. Teams across the council had been involved in reviewing the website content from their service to ensure the information was up to date and met corporate standards for the use of plain English and a customer first approach.

7. The new website is fully integrated with My Hastings, which enables users to carry out a variety of transactions online and contact the council about a range of issues. This approach also enables the council to record data and customer feedback more effectively.
8. The new website was launched on 13 July 2016.

## **Task and Finish Group**

9. The task and finish group met on 20 September 2016.
10. The members of the task and finish group were Councillors Howard, Rankin and Dowling.
11. After an introduction and overview by the Customer First Communications Champion, the group were given a number of common tasks and transactions to carry out on the new site including; waste, revenues and benefits, licensing, planning, and housing enquiries.
12. Members views were sought on the customer journey to complete these tasks, the quality of the information available and the length of time it took them to complete each transaction.
13. The task and finish group provided very positive feedback on the new site, adding the content and customer journey had significantly improved.

## **Recommendations**

14. The task and finish group made recommendations for further improvements, as follows:
  - Postcode Search for the Your Councillors page – the group recommended the re-introduction of a postcode search to enable residents to find the contact details for the ward Councillor. Since the meeting, the postcode search option has been reintroduced.
  - Reporting Pot Holes – during their initial testing, the task and finish group found that the link from the council's website to East Sussex County Council's online reporting system for potholes was broken. The link has been corrected and now takes users directly to the East Sussex Highways site.
  - Postcode search for council tax and non-domestic rates –the task and finish group suggested introducing a post code search for council tax and non-domestic rates look-up. The Customer First Communications Champion agreed to investigate this with the Revenues and Benefits team.
  - Further testing by all members – the task and finish group suggested that all members should be encouraged to test the new website and provide feedback to the team. A copy of the exercise completed by the task and

finish group has been sent to all members by email and a reminder placed in the Members Bulletin.

15. The task and finish group thanked all those who had supported the launch of the council's new website.