REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 20 MAY 2013

REPORT ON: CHANNEL SHIFT & WEBSITE STRATEGY

REPORT BY: HEAD OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

REPORT NUMBER: 206-2013

1.0   PURPOSE OF REPORT

        The purpose of this report is to recommend a corporate strategy and detailed action plan for growing web transactions, delivering channel shift and developing a means of website secure authentication.

2.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

        Agreement is sought for the following:

        •   Agree the recommendations outlined in paragraph 5.0 of this report
        •   Agree the Action Plan in Appendix 1
        •   Agree adoption of the channel shift principles outlined in Appendix 2
        •   Agree adoption of the communications strategy outlined in Appendix 3

3.0   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

        None identified at present.

4.0   BACKGROUND

4.1   The Customer Services Project Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, has identified that the Council should '**enhance and develop web-based services to provide a wider range of access channels and to encourage our customers as far as possible to channel shift to the most cost effective channel'**.

4.2   The Project Group set up three short-life sub-groups. One of these groups was tasked with developing a corporate strategy and detailed action plan for web transactions, channel shift and the development of website secure authentication to support the above. The deliverables of the short-life working group were:

        •   A web strategy document that covers:
                        a) Web transactions
                        b) Channel Shift
                        c) Secure Authentication

        •   An action plan to implement the strategy.

4.3   In conjunction with the Website Steering Group, the IT Division has already deployed many transactions, on-line application forms and information on Council Services. The average income from website transactions exceeds £1M per month and website visitors average around 7,000 per day.

4.4   The management and development of the Council's website is controlled by the Website Steering Group. The group is chaired by the Performance & Improvement Manager and the membership includes Information Technology staff, Leisure & Culture Dundee community information staff, design staff and senior representatives from each Department of the Council.

The operational roles and responsibilities of maintaining and developing the website are briefly outlined below:

- **IT Division** – Platform provision, application and transaction development, security, support, capacity planning
- **L&C CIT** – Standardisation and provision of corporate content
- **Design team** – Content design, promotion, advertising
- **Departments** – Departmental Website content, departmental promotion/development

4.5   The Website is continually being improved and developed. A refreshed Council website was deployed in November 2012. The website has been enhanced by deploying a Scottish standard for website navigation and the content management system (which underpins all website content) has been replaced. These major enhancements make it easier for customers to navigate the website and easier for departmental website staff to update content.

5.0   WEBSITE STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Enhancing and developing web-based transaction as part of a channel-shift strategy has been identified as a key element of service improvement, and has the potential to provide efficiency and cost-reduction benefits. However, this can only happen if demand is reduced for the more expensive, existing face-to-face and telephone channels. Departments should develop a channel shift plan for each Service which is either currently available on the website, or planned to be made available on the websites. This plan should detail the measure to be taken to reduce current channel volumes and increase web channel volumes. (ACTION PLAN No 1)

5.2   A key recommendation is that Channel Shift should become a core improvement project for every Council Department. Comprehensive reporting information is available on website usage and this information should form part of each Department's quarterly performance reporting. This information can inform progress on transaction uptake/channel shift. (ACTION PLAN No. 2).

5.3   It is agreed that a common set of Channel Shift principles are required and should be adopted across the Council. Adoption of a common set of principles will assist departments and ensure a corporate consistency of approach and delivery of Channel Shift. These principles are outlined on Appendix 1. (ACTION PLAN No 3)

5.4   The Website Steering Group has identified a list of high-volume transactions which should be prioritised for website development, once a means of secure authentication is available. A National Secure Authentication portal had previously been planned for all local authorities, and DCC intended to be the first authority to test and deploy this portal. The National solution has been delayed and DCC IT Division have prototyped an in-house authentication solution. This was successfully deployed in April. (ACTION PLAN No 4)

5.5   After successful testing of this solution, the IT Division will commence work, with Departments on developing and deploying the priority list of Secure Transactions identified in the above. This is detailed in the action plan. (ACTION PLAN No 5)

5.6   The website makes extensive use of the Govmetric feedback system. Website satisfaction levels are currently below telephone contact and face-to-face contact satisfaction levels. This satisfaction level disparity is common across local government websites. However, clear, effective action and responses must be put in place to address all negative website comment. This should form part of website steering group and Departmental management team website monitoring. (ACTION PLAN No 6)

5.7   New services available on the website will need to be communicated, advertised and promoted. A proposed communications strategy is included at Appendix 3 (ACTION PLAN No 7).

6.0   POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no issues in this regard to report on.

6.0   CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0   BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

GED BELL
HEAD OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY   Date: 29 April 2013

Item no:	Action	Owner	Due
1	Departments to develop channel-shift plan for each website service and transaction (existing & new)	Directors	Jun 2013
2	Reporting on Website activity and statistics to be a quarterly item on all department Management teams & periodic reporting to Strategic management team	Directors	Jun 2013
3	Adoption of the complete list of Channel Shift principles, as outlined in Appendix 2 of this report	Directors & Web steering group	Jun 2013
4	Deployment and testing of an in-house website Secure Authentication platform	Head of IT	Apr 2013
5	Prioritised deployment of Secure Authentication services on the website: • Distribution of Council Tax Bills reminders, Housing Benefit Notifications etc • Landlord Letters (Housing Benefit notification) and landlord payment schedules • Upload supporting evidence for benefit claims • View Consolidated Debt Online • Social Work billing • Community Care portal • Housing Lettings • Rent Account • Housing Repairs • Education clothing grants • Free school meals applications • Music contracts • Pest control • Bulky Uplifts/Special Collections • NEC applications (Lower volume transactions to follow)	Head of IT Directors Website Steering group	From May 2012 – Dec 2014
6	All Departments to have effective Govmetric feedback response and rectification procedures in place	Directors	Jun 2013
7	Adoption of Communication strategy	Directors & Web steering group	Jun 2013

Principles of Channel Shift

Departmental Management team responsibilities
- Growth of Website traffic, e-mail communication, transactions and information provision should be key PI's in all Department's Service Plans
- 20% p.a. growth should be the default target for website growth
- Channel Shift principles should be used to develop Channel Shift for all Services
- Website Channel Shift performance should be a quarterly item on each Management team Agenda
- Quarterly statistics of website traffic and transactions should be presented, analysed and actions planned at Departmental management teams.
- Channel Shift prioritisation should be driven by reducing high-volume and avoidable contact
- 'Simple', high-volume processes should also be prioritised

Council publications, leaflets, advertising, correspondence & Website
- Website addresses and e-mail addresses should be given prominence in all Council published materials
- Wherever possible, publish a full website link for the service offering (i.e. do not just publish www.dundeecity.co.uk publish the full name of the service i.e. www.dundeecity.gov.uk/education/schoolholidays/)
- If a telephone number is also available for the service, this should be less prominent (e.g. smaller font, bottom of page, etc.)
- Business information & transactions - Consideration should be given to making web/e-mail the only channel for transactions with businesses

Channel Shift marketing
- All call-centre automated 'comfort messages' should encourage customers to use the website for contact
- All front-line staff should offer the website as the preferred channel for transactions/information when customers present at offices or phone the Council.
- Use Council vehicles to advertise the website
- Use Council clothing to advertise the website

Corporate Channel Shift Policy requirements
- 'Ease of use' test should be applied to all transactions and services transferred to the web
- Transaction deployment does not need to be the entire 'end-to-end' process. For example, if a service request appears automated on the website, but simply generates a back end e-mail request for service this should be prioritised if it is:
  1. High-volume
  2. Beneficial to the Customer

Communication Strategy for Channel Shift

Council web address to be prominent and highlight online 24/7 services on

- The wide range of printed information, advertising and publicity which informs service users and promotes council activities and services.
- All published promotional, information material, advertising, vehicle livery and building signage.
- BT telephone book
- All Council emails
- Wheelie bins

Promoting channel shift

- All call-centre automated 'comfort messages' should encourage customers to use the website for contact
- All front-line staff should offer the website as the preferred channel for transactions/information when customers present at offices or phone the Council.
- One stop shops to display at each enquiry desk web address poster promoting 24/7 online services.

Media campaigns to promote channel shift

- Radio
- Local press

Channel shift poster displays at –

- One stop shops
- Libraries
- All main Council buildings
- Back of buses
- Councillor surgeries
- Supermarkets