

Website content management system review

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Arif – Business Support Services

Executive Summary:

Walsall Council Website www.walsall.gov.uk is the main website for the council and attracts over 500,000 visits to the homepage every month. It also has the ability to develop microsites for partnership websites and manages the council's intranet static content.

The web content management system Livelink (an Opentext product) was purchased in 2006 for £110k following a full procurement project for a content management system to support the national E Government programme. This software hasn't been upgraded or supported since 2009 following advice and guidance from ICT. Both the website and its associated microsites are developed by the web team.

The web focus group agreed to review the current system and the growth of alternative open source products, reviewed content, functionality, opportunities for web marketing and business continuity. It has also implemented a number of improvements to the website as part of its continuous improvement programme.

Following this review a potential roadmap for the future development of the website has been developed to support its ongoing improvement activities. Two alternative roadmaps are currently under discussion and recommendations will be made to Cabinet at a date to be confirmed for a decision in 2011. The attached report outlines the main findings from this review and provides information about proposals currently requiring further discussion.

Reason for scrutiny:

Following a presentation to Cllr Arif it was agreed that the report and presentation should be made available to scrutiny.

Recommendations:

That the panel considers progress with improvements to the website and gives any views on future approach to content management to the Cabinet to assist its future decision-making.

Background papers:

Web content management review Feb 2011

Web content management review presentation Feb 2011

Resource and legal considerations:**Revenue**

The website content management system is currently without a support contract and costs £0 to maintain.

The web team have generated revenue for the council by developing microsites for services and bringing some partnership websites back within the council. To date £8k has been created by microsite development (this represents a saving to the council too by reducing the cost of spend on external web development suppliers for some partnership services)

The roadmap options however, may require investment to ensure that the website is fit for purpose, secure and developing new functionality.

The intention in 2011 is to ensure that all council services and partners consider content management system microsites and thereby reduce potential development costs.

A web advertising income plan is under development and we have;

1. Reviewed what councils do in this area (only 17 other councils take advertising on their sites currently, up to £10k p. a. may be achievable).
2. Developed guidelines/protocol for review by Legal
3. Developed a 'rate card' for potential advertisers
4. Began work on a homepage 'advertise here' button and associated pages which will launch as a part of the new homepage template

Citizen impact:

The Walsall council website is one of the main access channels for Walsall residents, local businesses, parents and visitors to Walsall. This channel receives over 500,000 hits per month. It is continuously developing functionality to ensure that it meets the needs of its users. It links closely with associated social media

sites (Facebook, Twitter). It is currently undertaking a customer survey to identify ongoing requirements and improvements. Web content is also being reviewed to ensure that it support local priorities and the objectives of the Corporate Plan.

Environmental impact:

Finding information via e-services reduces the requirement to print vast quantities of information.

Performance management:

Providing web content supports the council's performance – in particular it is supporting the principles of Working Smarter and the Right, Fast and Simple programme of activity.

Equality Implications:

The website has not carried out an equality impact assessment to date. The web team review advice from web standard agencies including Wc3 and Socitm to ensure that it provides accessible information. The team regularly check the accessibility of content to ensure that content can be viewed by as many members of the community as possible. The website includes a number of accessible features.

The ability to translate the website into 20 different languages is a great feature of the website. More languages are being added to this Google free service and the web team add new languages as they become available. The team are also lobbying for more of our local languages (i.e Urdu) to be added.

Consultation:

The web improvement group (with representatives from Communications, Print & Design, ICT and a service representative) and ICT have contributed to the development of this report. The council internal social media community are also contributing to the development. All comments or ideas provided to the web team are considered. A website consultation is currently underway and improvements will be identified following the review of this survey.

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1.0 Overview

- 1.1. Walsall Council Website www.walsall.gov.uk is the main website for the council and attracts over 500,000 people to the homepage every month. It also has the ability to develop microsites for partnership websites and manages the council's intranet static content.
- 1.2. The web content management system Livelink (an Opentext product) was purchased in 2006 for £110k following a full procurement project for a content management system to support the national E Government programme. This software hasn't been upgraded or supported since 2009 following advice and guidance from ICT. Both the website and its associated microsites are developed by the web team.
- 1.3. The web focus group agreed to review the current system and the growth of alternative open source products, reviewed content, the look and feel of the homepage, functionality, opportunities for web advertising and business continuity. It has also implemented a number of improvements to the website as part of its continuous improvement programme.
- 1.4. Following this review a potential roadmap for the future development of the website has been developed to support its ongoing improvement activities. Two alternative roadmaps are currently under discussion and recommendations will be made to Cabinet at a date to be confirmed for a decision in 2011. This report outlines the main findings from this review and provides information about proposals currently requiring further discussion.

2.0 Website content management system review

2.1. Business requirements

A refresh of business requirements for the current content management system was undertaken by the Web team and received input from members of the web focus group. Requirements include the ability to manage large volumes of static content, ability to integrate with open source and ICT systems, navigation, workflow, web author management, templates, development of microsites and ability to meet the expected website accessibility standards. The transactional functionality requirements are currently being managed by the ICT infrastructure architecture.

- 2.2. The council website must be able to manage large volumes of static content, have the ability to adapt with new technology, provide cost effective support arrangements, enable the web team to train large numbers of web authors and to ensure that the website is constantly changing and refreshed.

2.3. Homepage and brand requirements

The web improvement group reviewed potential designs for the homepage and discussed implications for the new brand refresh. The webteam and Print and Design have been tasked with developing the homepage template to give a

fresher, less cluttered and more modern look and feel to the site. Web Advertising is also being considered. Representatives from the web team and print and design have now identified requirements and the web team consulted on the web header banner.

- 2.4. An interim banner was implemented by the web team and proved to be extremely popular and encouraged the involvement of local photographers (received national interest). This is to remain with a revised colour scheme and a refresh of the style templates. Any future system will be able to adapt the brand recommendations.

- 2.5. Open Source versus Livelink Commercial Content Management System
To develop a roadmap for the current content Management System the Open Text product Livelink product was mapped against the revised requirements for the website. Free Open Source products were also considered for the future roadmap.

- 2.6. **Livelink** 'Does the job' for website static content, accessibility standards, templates can be redesigned, further functionality is available and being developed further and there is an experienced author network. Any upgrades will be a step change and require minor training support.

- 2.7. **Open Source** – 'Could do the job' but tend to be used for smaller websites, the author network would need to be retrained and support would be required. Online support can be mixed for open source products and they often change to the 'next new thing' regularly – its support network may evaporate. Little added value.

- 2.8. Architectural review

ICT have reviewed the current Live link environment. The Livelink environment is made up of two core environments, an internal staging area where content authors add content and a public access area.

- 2.9. Both areas are physically separate from each other meaning that there is no physical connection between the two environments. The environments are connected through the use of the councils Firewall and various packet routing configurations. This creates a compliant, managed, secure environment.

3.0 Functionality development

3.1. 2010 Delivering Right, Fast and Simple Business solutions

The web improvement project management within the communications team identified a number of improvements to the website. As part of its ongoing development the following enhancements have been made during 2010 / 2011 to ensure that development is continuous programme of activity within the communications delivery of the website.

3.2. These include;

- Improved accessibility
- Quick links to find our councillor and council and cabinet decisions (an improvement plan is being implemented)
- Post code lookups
- Flickr images
- Google maps, search and translation
- Ordnance survey map open data – roadwork maps
- Enhanced service disruption web and social media service
- Social media integration
- Leadership forum section on the intranet
- Local news links and RSS newsfeeds
- Most popular web pages – quick links
- Open Data microsite
- Weather widget
- Development of a draft web advertising report and web page
- An advertising rate card

4.0 Content review

4.1. An audit of web content and web authors has been undertaken by the web team. They have identified skills and removed content/authors from the network (who no longer contributed to the content). There are over 100 active authors across the council at present.

4.2. Roadmap for content refresh

The web team are currently implementing a content refresh programme. They are visiting heads of services to clarify author roles, feedback outcomes of the content review and identify service priorities. The refresh is also looking at strategic and area community plan priorities.

5.0 Business Continuity

5.1. Security

ICT and the web improvement team identified a number of measures to improve the current business continuity for the website. There were concerns about the security of the current website and a full security review was undertaken by James Harvey – Solutions Architect. The outcome from the review determined that the public access and staging aspect of the Livelink system poses no significant security threat.

5.2. ICT System Support

Following various discussions a number of improvements were identified to improve disaster and system recovery. Three phases of improvement have been identified.

5.3. **First Phase** improvement – December 2010 – Implemented

The Application server and Database servers are backing up each other. This means that if the system fails the anticipated recovery time will be between 1.5–3 days. (This has been quicker)

5.4. **Second Phase** improvement – April 2011 – in development

An image of the servers is being replicated on an interim virtual machine. This will reduce recovery time by half a day.

5.5. **Third Phase** improvement - Summer 2011 – in development

To migrate the current infrastructure onto a virtual machine (hardware). This will “virtualise” two servers onto one physical piece of equipment to provide a safer and more secure environment for the website.

5.6. Livelink roadmap - software support

The supplier does offer a support package for the Livelink environment. However, Livelink will not be a supportable product from the supplier perspective from February 2014.

5.7. At present there is no support contract in place with a 3rd party /supplier for the Content Management environment. This decision was taken because support had been minimal since it was installed in 2006 and the web team and members of ICT understand the system environment and its core components are partially documented. At the time of the decision to terminate support no further updates of the software were anticipated.

5.8. The software supplier has since developed a roadmap for the product including a significant recent upgrade in 2010. Implementation of the current supplier roadmap includes the installation of their new product Red Dot Web Manager.

5.9. Initial back dated support costs were considered excessive and the team requested a revised option package from the supplier.

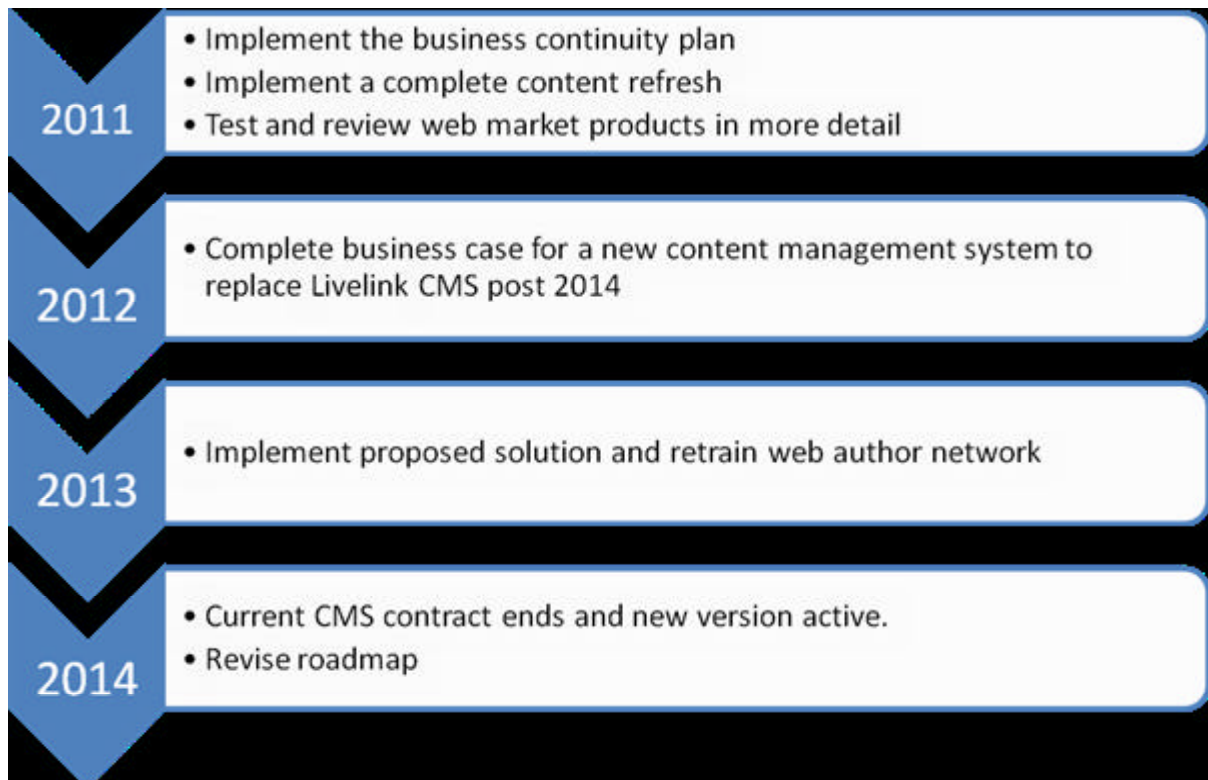
5.10. A revised support and upgrade package has been offered to the council for consideration with a much reduced support offer until 2015. This will include the upgrade to the Red Dot web manager product. An extended roadmap would be developed post 2015.

6.0 Next steps - Content management system (CMS) roadmap options

- 6.1. Any future CMS must have the ability to manage static content to the public domain. It must also provide a cost efficient support framework and enable multiple web authors to develop content quickly and easily. It must also be able to integrate with new technology including open source applications.
- 6.2. The livelink environment is a secure simple, manageable environment which provides the core functional requirement of managing and delivering static content to the public domain.
- 6.3. Much knowledge and capability exists within the web team relating to the management and operating of the content management system LiveLink environment and as discussed, the core functionality that the produces delivers today will be fit for purpose for the strategic organisational aims.
- 6.4. Two alternative roadmaps are currently under discussion and recommendations will be made to Cabinet at a date to be confirmed for a decision in 2011.

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Roadmap A – Develop roadmap for Livelink CMS post 2014



Roadmap B – Continuation of Livelink CMS product

