

Decision Maker: Improvement & Efficiency Sub Committee

Date: 1st June 2010

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: PARTNERSHIP WORKING - WEB DEVELOPMENT

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Chief Officer: Chief Executive

Ward: All wards

1. Reason for report

To bring Members up to date with the work of the Organisational Improvement Team to secure funding for web development as a key piece of work aimed at achieving the corporate outcomes set out in our Corporate Operating Principles model (COP):

- Reduction in processing costs
- Reduction in avoidable contact
- High volume transactional services available online

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Members are asked to endorse the bid to Capital Ambition on web development, as working in partnership with Bexley to share investment costs allows us the opportunity to tackle an area of service improvement that would otherwise be very costly for Bromley, especially given the current financial climate.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: N/A.
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost Total cost £1 million (£500k Capital Ambition, £250k Bromley, £250k Bexley) Bromley already has £240k set aside in the capital programme awaiting a business case - code 936451 called 'Joint Web Platform'
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring cost. Although the bulk of costs is capital expenditure there would be some recurring cost in terms of software licences and maintenance.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Customer Contact Centre (Sheila Bennett) & Bromley Knowledge (Jim Grainger)
 4. Total current budget for this head: £Customer Contact Centre £1,385,300 (£976,330 controllable budget) & Bromley Knowledge £222,330 (£114,720 controllable budget)
 5. Source of funding: Split £500k Capital Ambition, £250k Bexley, £250k Bromley
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): Out of additional staff resource. Bid put together by the Organisational Improvement Team with assistance from Heads of Service
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Estimate one working week (36 hours) drawn from various officers
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: No statutory requirement or Government guidance.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): All customers should be considered potential beneficiaries.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Development of the Bromley website has been an ambition for some time and when the new Organisational Improvement Team was set up in Oct 2009 it was quickly made one of the team's key priorities to investigate.
- 3.2 Since then a specification document has been created and some initial high level (and alarming quotes) have been obtained. A partnership opportunity was also investigated with Lewisham and Newham but their budgets were very sizeable and the business partners' early quotations were considered to be very high. Too high to be able to put a business case together that worked effectively as an 'invest to save' and it would have been more an 'invest to improve' business case with some efficiency savings more as an aside given the payback period.
- 3.3 Around the same time March 2010 (and notably the end of the financial year) Capital Ambition was given £5.1 million from DCLG. The Capital Ambition Programme Board decided to create an investment pot for efficiency projects and wrote directly to all London Chief Executives inviting bids against this fund *"to resource new projects that would help London local government operate effectively within future reduced resource settlements; contribute to more coherent London-wide services or pilot new forms of service delivery that are potentially more cost effective"*. The board made it clear that funding was primarily for partnership bids from two or more London Authorities.
- 3.4 Since that time Bromley and Bexley have been working in partnership to put together a bid covering three key areas of customer service delivery.

The key areas of the bid are:

- Website Development
 - Transactional & Authentication Capability
 - Customer Relationship Management Systems & Integration Into Back Office Line Of Business Systems
- 3.5 All three are interlinked and cover the end-to-end process of a self service request. These are made by a customer online through our website, into our front end customer relationship management system and then automatically into our core back office system where the request can be actioned.
- 3.6 Further opportunities are available to explore shared services more generally including a feasibility study into co-location of our contact centres. The bid was submitted to Capital Ambition on Monday 19th May and we expect to hear whether it has been successful by mid June.
- 3.7 The full bid is attached to this covering report. The project summary, aims and objectives on the first page will quickly give Members a brief overview of the bid. Section 1.7 may be particularly relevant to Members interested in the detail. This is because it provides a table showing the various potential areas for development, where Bromley and Bexley are in these areas of work, and a rough estimation of the costs involved in completing these pieces of work.
- 3.8 This table also highlights an important point; that websites today are not one coherent piece of software simply bought off the shelf. In the 1990's a website was a number of static pages presenting information to the customer. The customer then in effect left the website to call, email or write to the owner and proactively seek out the service advertised. Today we all expect websites to do so much more and to act as an online one-stop shop where we can access information, obtain the product, or service and track its progress all in a couple of easy steps. In

order to achieve this websites are now made up of numerous pieces of separate software often referred to as ‘plug-ins’ that give a website that extra transactional capability. This does not come cheap as there are integration packages; e-form packages; payment applications; e-booking systems; and authentication portals all over and above the basic content management system.

- 3.9 The technology moves so fast that it would be fair to say that there are few people in local government who fully understand all the elements in play in modern website creation. But once again by pooling our resources and expertise with Bexley we should put ourselves in a stronger position to be able to make strong business decisions around the options available to us. But first things first Bromley needs to secure the investment before we can proceed any further.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Shared Services in general raises policy implications for all boroughs involved and has often proved to be the stumbling block to progressing beyond initial speculative discussions. If and when funds are secured from Capital Ambition it will be necessary for both boroughs to discuss how a joint project will be undertaken and resources shared for the duration of the project. It was thought however that web development was a good opportunity to investigate shared services generally given that it is sharing development costs, consultancy, software licences etc. That doesn’t necessarily mean dealing with sharing staff on a permanent basis at this stage which makes it a more ‘user friendly’ and less HR sensitive pilot for both boroughs to trial.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications should be positive ones. Both boroughs are looking to invest in channel shift and exploit the opportunities that the web makes possible. But web development is expensive (We were quoted £500k simply to move onto a new Content Management System whilst other boroughs have paid £700k. To make the site more transactional and add video, mapping, alerts etc some boroughs are paying over £1 million. One borough reported £3.5 million had been set aside to spend on front end customer services generally). In the current climate Bromley needs to make limited investment stretch to achieve the most ‘bang for its buck’ while continuing to modernise. The £250k set aside currently for possible web development is limited when you look at the figures quoted above but when added to Bexley’s and Capital Ambition’s possible contributions, should the bid be successful, there is the resource available to do much more.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No obvious legal implications at this stage. Having a website is not in itself a statutory duty.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No immediate personnel implications. However if the desired outcomes are achieved (10-15% channel shift) then staff resources will need to be also transferred accordingly. In this instance that would require moving some small resource away from phones to support online content management work. If the bid is successful it would also mean prioritising this work in the Information Systems Division as there will be a lot of IT systems support required.

Non-Applicable Sections:	N/A
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	