Winchester
City Council

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

TOPIC – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PUBLIC ACCESS TO DATA AND INFORMATION VIA THE WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL WEBSITE INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Corporate Director (Governance), the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed request, the Leader may require the matter be referred to Cabinet for determination.

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Committee Administrator:
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SUMMARY

The Public Access to Data & Information via the WCC Website ISG reported the outcome of their review to The Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 September 2012 (Report OS51 refers). The minute extract from that meeting is attached as Appendix 1 to this notice.

Since the meeting, the Leader has agreed that the Portfolio Holder consider the recommendations of the ISG and outline his response in a Portfolio Holder Decision Notice.

DECISION

That the final recommendations of the Public Access to Data & Information via the WCC Website ISG be approved, as set out in Appendix 1.

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

All of the alternative options were considered by the original ISG who have recommended the actions within this PHD.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The resource implications would mainly be officer time from the Communications Team as part of their forthcoming programme of work. Key areas with financial implications would be the possible redevelopment of the Planning and Licensing areas, however these would need to be properly scoped and a business case approved in order to accurately ascertain costs and to identify funding before implementation can take place .

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE PROPOSED DECISION

Councillor Wright, as the chair of the ISG, has been consulted on the content of the final recommendations contained in this PHD Notice.

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

N/A

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

N/A

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

N/A

Approved by: (signature)   **Date of Decision: 16.10.12**

Councillor Stephen Godfrey - Portfolio Holder for Finance & Administration

APPENDIX – MINUTE EXTRACT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD 17 SEPTEMBER 2012

1. **PUBLIC ACCESS TO DATA AND INFORMATION VIA THE WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL WEBSITE INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP - RECOMMENDATIONS**
    (Report OS51 refers)

    As Chairman of the Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) Councillor Wright introduced the Report. In summary, he urged officers and Members to continue to come forward with ideas to ensure the website remained both informative and relevant. He reminded Members that the website would ultimately save the Council time and money if correct information was available and easily obtainable.

    During discussion, and in response to a suggestion, the Head of Communications supported the deletion of the final sentence of recommendation (vi) with regard to Mapping. It had been noted that since publication of the Report, Google had recently announced a potential charging regime and/or use of adverts.

    The Head of Communications also advised that the Council's website would continue to evolve with regard to its ease of use via mobile devices. Further Winchester specific downloadable applications were also under development and it was acknowledged that these should ideally be available to all operating platforms.

    The Corporate Director (Governance) suggested that recommendation (xi) be amended, so that the Portfolio Holder only report to the next meeting if the Chairman of the ISG was not satisfied with Cabinet's response to the ISG's recommendations. This was agreed.

    RESOLVED:

    1.   That The Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the following recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group as set out below and recommend them to Cabinet for implementation:

    i.   *Website*
         The website should be seen as the primary point of contact for the Council's residents. All departments should actively participate in ensuring the site is customer focused and transactional, with the aim of becoming more efficient and effective and maximising potential savings.

    ii. *Planning Information*
         Corporate Communications Team in conjunction with Planning to review and redesign if necessary the functionality behind the Council's planning portal in line with user

feedback. This should take place when the new EDRM system is being incorporated.

iii. *Licensing Information*
Explore resources available to create a Licensing Portal based on the improved functionality of the planning portal, and in line with user feedback.

iv. *Social Media*
The Council should recognise the importance and potential of social media in democracy, and seek opportunities to increase access and to gather feedback before decisions are made in line with the principles of localism.

v. *Optimisation*
Using feedback via the in-built moderation centre (within the CMS), customer and staff feedback, and analytics to ensure the A-Z works effectively as a navigational tool, and the search engine is as thorough and comprehensive as possible within the limitations of the tool.

vi. *Mapping*
Create comprehensive mapping resources with user-friendly interfaces of key facilities in and around the District such as car parks, play sites, community venues and recycling facilities. All data from these maps will be made available as open, 'mashable' data within the Data Hub.

vii. *Data*
Continue to improve and add relevant data in an open format to the Data hub, building in interactive graphs where required to illustrate data sets making the information more accessible to users.

viii. *Reporting*
Identify the most useful statistical information to create monthly custom reports for the e-Communications team and Web Officers. This will allow for detailed analysis and aid identification of key areas for improvement in terms of transactional and informational content.

ix. *Content Optimisation*
Work with Web Officers to improve and restructure content where necessary to provide users with the information they need in the most efficient way (the information will be gathered from feedback and statistical analysis). Focussing on quality of information over sheer quantity as has been the case in the past.

x. *e-Forms*
Optimise existing e-Forms; streamlining and removing unnecessary fields. All personal fields will be moved to the final page before submission to increase completion rates.

The e-Communications Team will work with Web Officers to identify where additional e-Forms would be beneficial. A review of response times to forms coming through the website should be undertaken.

xi. That the Portfolio Holder be asked to report back to the Committee in 12 months with regard to Cabinet's implementation of the above recommendations.