

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Business and Commercial Services Board held on 3 March 2020

Present

Councillor Robinson (Chairman)

Councillors Branson, Davis, Francis, Rennie, Sceal, Scott, Thain-Smith and Weeks

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor(s): Patel

31 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

32 Minutes

The minutes of the Business and Commercial Services Board meeting on the 21 January 2020 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

33 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

34 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda.

35 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that the Litter Review previously undertaken by the Business and Commercial Services Board was due to be seen in Cabinet at the end of March subject to final consultation with officers and submission to this Board.

36 HBC's Website

The Chairman agreed to take both items on the agenda together as they both covered similar issues.

The officers opened the item with a presentation covering web usage statistics, the recent history of the website's design and server, previous feedback given by residents about the interface, the change in accessibility regulations which impact the website, the costs of the services currently being paid for and the costs of future developments.

In response to questions by the Board the Digital Content Manager advised that:

- 1) the website design was initially based on the website of Westminster City Council in 2016;
- 2) there were no plans to redesign the website at present;
- 3) the content found on the website was supplied by the service it comes from, for example planning guidance notes was supplied by the Planning Team;
- 4) cookie notices were a legal requirement for the user to grant consent to the website owner to track their movements. HBC was developing a new more advanced cookie notice for the main corporate website;
- 5) the search tool runs a database query subject to tagging page content, and it should work more efficiently going forward;
- 6) the website has 468 service pages to keep up to date so some may not be completely relevant/may need updating – it's the responsibility of the service to check relevancy;
- 7) the images used on the website follow the Gov.uk design principle;
- 8) external companies such as Webcurl were used for security and website support;
and
- 9) the different websites such as Have With Havant and Get Up and Go Havant were created to hold different information and serve different purposes than the corporate website, which explained why the interface looked so different.

In response to questions by the Board the Communications and Marketing Manager explained that:

- a) the use of external search engines to find specific webpages such as Google altered the way the council's website was accessed;
- b) photos on webpages can decrease functionality by increasing webpage loading times;

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- c) it's often the most vulnerable members of society who need to access webpages more quickly and the Screen Reader function struggles to process and make audible tables and images;
and
- d) the corporate website was no longer the main digital communications channel with residents as social media had become a more prevalent platform to use.

In response to questions from the Board the Head of Organisational Development advised that:

- i) HBC's website providers were reviewed roughly every three years;
- ii) whilst there was not room in the budget for a full redesign of the website, they could go away and make a mock-up of the landing page incorporating more images on the website.

The Cabinet Lead for People and Communications explained that the website's design was intended to be the most functional for borough's residents to access services and pay council tax. Communications with residents were undertaken via electronic and paper means. Whilst delivering information in paper form through letterboxes reached the biggest pool of residents, there was no guarantee that residents would digest the information before recycling the paper. It was however still the most effective method of communication as explained in the presentation delivered at the start of the meeting (90% of adults in the borough have used the internet in the last three months).

In response to further questions about accessibility on the website, it was advised that systems such as BrowseAloud (assistive technology software that adds text-to-speech functionality to websites) were in place on the corporate website. There were new accessibility regulations which needed to be met by September in order for the whole website to be legally sound according to the Local Government Association. This meant the officers could not take on a full report and project to create a new website for the Board to discuss. It was AGREED that the officers would consider adding more images to the website and create a small report highlighting the cost of making the changes they designed to inform the Board.

37 Marketing and Communications

This item was taken in conjunction with the previous item.

The officers agreed to come back at a later time with their findings.

The Chairman thanked the officers and members for their time.

The meeting commenced at 5.01 pm and concluded at 6.23 pm

