

# Executive Report



**REPORT NO  
39/10**

Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

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To: EXECUTIVE

DATE: 3 September 2010

## Transforming Vale's website

### Recommendation(s)

- (a) That Executive agrees to join a project with South Oxfordshire District Council to transform their respective websites to be more customer focused
- (b) That Executive agrees to an exemption to the contract procedure rules that will allow the Vale to appoint the same supplier as South, which will deliver a combined saving of £20,000.

### Purpose of Report

1. Firstly to ask executive to join a project with South to transform their respective websites from service directories to sites that are much more customer focused. Secondly to agree an exemption to the contract procedure rules that will allow the Vale to appoint the same supplier as South, which will deliver a combined saving of £20,000.

### Strategic Objectives

2. A more customer focused website that pushes existing online services, contributes to Strategic Objective: Managing our business effectively, specifically the following priorities:
  - provide value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users
  - optimise access to our services

- improve communication about the council's activities and achievements.

## Background

3. The council's website (like South's) is tired and has outgrown its original structure to the extent that it is difficult for visitors to navigate their way around and find online services. The content management system (CMS) is an off-the-shelf product called Tridion, which costs £5,825 a year in licenses. It requires external support for which there is a call off contract and a budget set aside of £20,000 a year.
4. South Oxfordshire District Council is delivering a project to transform its website from a directory of services to a site that is customer focused and pushes online services. Both of which should not only boost satisfaction with the website but the council as a whole, as residents will easily be able to navigate to the information they're after and can access services when it's convenient to them. South has recently been through a lengthy tender exercise to appoint a designer (Reading Room) and developer (Nameless) to transform its site. Both offered good value for money.
5. South will be moving to a new (CMS), called Drupal, which is a very popular and highly rated open source system that's free and has a large, free support network. Part of the specification was that the CMS needed to be capable of supporting another website in the future, i.e. the Vale's.
6. Given these circumstances now would be a good time to consider transforming the Vale's site given the potential efficiency savings that could be achieved through a joint project and the need for both sites to become more customer focused.
7. The capital budget approved for the project to transform South's website is £57,246. This includes a new design, new site architecture, installing and developing a new content management system, user testing and migrating the content from the old site.
8. We have received written confirmation of the costs of the Vale joining the project based on the council's having the same design structure but with their individual branding. The total cost for transforming both sites is just over £94,206, so £47,103 each and a combined saving of £20,286 compared with running separate transformation projects. These costs are based on the 'worst-case' from information we have so far. If we get approval to proceed, we will negotiate with the developer to further reduce the costs. The only ongoing cost would be if the Vale site continues to be hosted externally, though this will not be possible with the current provider. There may be some advantages in outsourcing the hosting of both sites, and we will explore this separately.
9. The £47,000 needed for the Vale's site can be funded from existing budgets. As the sites will be supported internally the £20,000 currently earmarked for external support could be used to fund part of the transformation costs. Andrew Down has identified £27,000 from a capital budget set aside for online service projects, which are unlikely to require the full budget this year.

10. It's important to point out, however, that whilst the council would end up with a website that is more customer focused, up-to-date, more accessible and easy to navigate, it would not be more interactive as the budget previously set aside to facilitate the transactional side of the site would be needed to create the new site. Following the site's launch, the council could use the 2011/12 budget of £20,000 set aside for external support on increasing/improving the online services to make the website more transactional. Thereafter it is anticipated that this budget would be offered as a saving.
11. As the project involves using one CMS to drive two websites and South is ready to start building this, Vale's site could go live before the end of the financial year.

## **Options**

12. The option of doing nothing was considered, however, the council will need to update the website and if this is done at a later date the cost would be at least an additional £10,000 assuming the design structures for the two sites are identical but with separate branding.
13. The option of transforming the council's website in isolation was also considered, however, this does not make good business or financial sense for the same reason as is stated above.

## **Financial Implications**

14. A spend of £50,000 requires three quotations, however in this case the recommendation is that the companies already delivering on the South transformation also deliver on Vale's. As a result a formal Executive decision is needed to approve an exception under paragraph 77 of the contracts procedure rules to allow the Vale to appoint the same supplier as South.

## **Legal Implications**

15. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **Risks**

16. The main risk of not following the recommendation would be the lost opportunity to revamp the website at the most cost effective time.

## **Other implications**

17. None

## **Conclusion**

18. Through a joint project with South, the Vale can deliver a much needed more customer focused website and achieve combined savings of £20,000.

## **Background Papers**

**None**