

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		12 October 2016	
REPORT OF:		Cllr Abdul Khan – Chair of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Overview and Scrutiny Officer	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Report of Overview and Scrutiny – Integrated IT Service	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	Options	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	Options	If yes, date of publication:	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of a recent review conducted by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to IT.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **(1) That Cabinet be requested to ensure that the new website is user friendly for customers;**
- (2) That Cabinet be requested to investigate ways to make the online payment system simpler for customers to use;**
- (3) That Cabinet be requested to work with the Head of ICT to explore the possibility of the introduction of an integrated system for the website which would require only one simple login from a customer regardless of what service they required access to; and,**
- (4) That Cabinet be requested to ensure the new website and My Hyndburn app are compatible with assistive technologies in order to make them more accessible to residents who are visually impaired, elderly or those who have low literacy skills.**

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 6th September 2016, the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Resources and the Head of ICT. The Committee had requested to look at options for integrated ICT systems, particularly those which were customer facing.
- 3.2 A report was submitted relating to a proposal for the integration of Council web services including those currently available, those planned for the future, and those services which are available through the Council website via an external system (e.g. Council tax).
- 3.3 Recently there have been enormous developments in the range of technologies and digital tools and approaches available to both citizens and organisations. Smart phones and tablet computers are now everywhere; town centres and public buildings routinely offer wireless access; data and systems are increasingly stored in the 'cloud'. These advances have enabled citizens and public bodies to change the ways in which they interact, gain access to information and services, and organise their work. Many councils have been quick to recognise the opportunities offered by technology and digital tools including 'apps' to inform, alert or provide services to users. Central government has invested in essential infrastructure such as reliable and fast broadband connections and the Public Services Network (PSN). In 2016, the need to take advantage of such digital innovations has never been greater. Over the current spending review period, local government has suffered cuts to its budgets whilst, at the same time, demand on local services has been increasing inexorably.
- 3.4 The report informed the Committee of steps already taken to create online communication channels for residents. Since October 2015, the My Hyndburn app has been operational to request certain services, including:
- Information Request
 - Delivery Request (i.e. new bin)
 - Report dead animals and needles
 - Report fly tipping
 - Bulky Item collection
- Other services are also available, such as Council tax, but these require system specific usernames and passwords.
- 3.5 Although there have been step-changes and improvements made as above, and a new responsive web-site is being developed in-house and due to go-live by November 2016, it is apparent that the current situation is not particularly user-friendly when a citizen still has to remember multiple sign-on details to access the certain council services.
- 3.6 Councillors were concerned that the current website was difficult to navigate and that the search function did not work particularly well. Councillors were told that new technologies and the My Hyndburn app meant that many more Council services were available directly online, with more services to be added in the future. The report made reference to the cost to the Council of an online contact, which was significantly lower

than a face to face or even a telephone contact. Councillors were pleased with plans to introduce a new website, but wanted to ensure that this would be more user friendly.

- 3.7 Concerns were expressed that residents using the website encountered difficulties with having to log on multiple times and requiring different information dependant on the service they were trying to access, and confusion around this issue may be preventing more people from accessing online services. This was highlighted as an issue of concern in the report and Councillors indicated that it should be a priority to resolve this.
- 3.8 Councillors also discussed accessibility of the website and the app, and felt that it should be ensured that any future developments to online services are compatible with assistive technologies such as those that may be used by someone with a visual impairment.
- 3.9 The recommendations listed in paragraph 2.1 are a reflection of the discussions held on this topic.

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 **Cabinet may accept or reject any number of the recommendations made by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

5. Consultations

- 5.1 None applicable to this report

6. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	It is likely that if accepted, some of the recommendations will have a financial implication which at this time have not been costed.
Legal and human rights implications	Not applicable
Assessment of risk	Not applicable
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	Attached

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7. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:**
List of Background Papers

- 7.1 *Agenda, reports and minutes of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6th September 2016*
<https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=1082&Ver=4>