

**WEBSITE STRATEGY GROUP**  
**Wednesday, 26th January, 2011**

Present:- Councillor Wyatt (in the Chair); Jon Ashton, David Barker, Pete Lawrenson and Ceri Davis.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Anne Hawke, Rachel O'Neil, Steven Pearson and Sue Wilson.

**115. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24TH NOVEMBER, 2010**

**Agreed:-** (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010, be agreed as a true record.

It was noted that the direct email facility for the sending out of weekly bulletins had increased to 1,170 users from a list of around 2,100.

**116. WEBSITE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE**

Jon Ashton reported on the annual performance of the refreshed website highlighting:-

- Visitor Statistics:-

The number of unique visitors to the website had averaged out to around 65,000 a month. There were dips in numbers around May, with a large increase during December.

- Searches:-

The website was now very search orientated and was working well.

- Online Forms:-

The completion of online forms was an area of growth and continued to steadily increase. There had been an 11% increase in the number of forms submitted through the website. There had been a peak in December, mainly associated to the adverse weather conditions with Streetpride in particular receiving a notable increase.

- Cash Transactions:-

Online cash transactions had increased during 2010 by an average of 22% from the previous year, face to face cashier transactions had also dropped throughout 2010 by 5.3%. It was proposed to undertake a marketing campaign during February/March, 2011 for customers to consider the use of direct debit for the paying of Council Tax.

- Comments:-

Positive feedback had been received on customer use of the website. There was now increased interest in the Key Choices element of the

website now that the properties were no longer advertised in the local press.

It was also noted that Rotherham had improved its website position and was now 27<sup>th</sup> of the 430 Local Authorities in the Sitemorse ranking. The full 12 month data should be incorporated into the six monthly review of the website's performance that was presented to Cabinet.

**Agreed:-** That the report be noted and the information circulated to this Group.

#### **117. ADVERSE WEATHER - LESSONS LEARNT**

Jon Ashton reported on the information banner provided on the website during the period of inclement weather in November/December, 2010.

Statistics over the adverse weather period had been collected which indicated an average week of 360,000 page views had increased dramatically during December to 673,000 in the first week alone with 39,000 page views of the school closures page.

Following trials with a few schools, information on the pages relating to school closures can now be updated by the schools themselves. This new procedure is now in place and appeared to be working well.

On the whole it was felt that the information provided on the website was handled appropriately and kept up-to-date, along with information provided by the Press and Communications Team on Twitter.

**Agreed:-** That the information be noted.

#### **118. ONLINE PAYMENTS**

Jon Ashton provided information on a recent meeting with Central Finance regarding the possible use of the Civica payments software with regards to the on-line shop.

The cost of providing this element was in the region of £6,000 and could be met from the website budget should agreement be reached. Further information was provided on what could be provided and its capabilities. Kirklees Council had already adopted this approach and had their on-line shop up and running.

**Agreed:-** That action be taken to include this element in the Civica programme and that the website budget fund the cost.

#### **119. PUBLISHING SPEND**

Jon Ashton reported that details of Council spending on items over £500 have been published on the website in the form of spreadsheet downloads.

An application to enable analysis of the figures was not to be made available at this time because Spikes Cavell's Spotlight on Spend software was expected to be online by the end of February. It was not the intention to actively promote the publication of spend data.

**Agreed:-** That the information be noted.

**120. BUDGET CONSULTATION SUMMARY**

Jon Ashton confirmed he had contacted Zafar Saleem with regards to the budget consultation figures from December, 2010. However, due to the exit of some officers of the Council these figures were not yet in a format that could be provided. A report on this information would be submitted to this meeting in due course.

Reference was also made to the online forums and blogs that were currently in existence. It was noted that the forums were very infrequently used and should, therefore, be removed. The blogs of the Mayor, Leader and the Chief Executive were updated on a regular basis and, therefore, would continue. Any Councillor who wanted a blog could do so, but it was their responsibility to ensure it was updated.

**121. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Agreed:-** That a further meeting be arranged in due course in the Town Hall.

**122. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was reported that the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel was to undertake a Scrutiny Review into the Council's Website at its meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2011.

The results of this Scrutiny Review should be provided in a report format and submitted to this Group for consideration.