

# East Herts Council Report

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 4 February 2020

**Report by:** Executive Member for Corporate Services and Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

**Report title:** Review of Website Satisfaction Performance

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### Summary

- In its first meeting of 2018/19 Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed all past performance data and identified issues and areas of concern that could be reviewed. Website satisfaction was identified as such an area and a paper was requested from the Head of Service.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION:

**(a) Committee Members review performance and comment as appropriate**

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 Committee Members review information presented and keep website satisfaction under review until sustained improvement is achieved.

#### **2.0 Background**

2.1 Website satisfaction is measured via the govmetric system. Anyone visiting the website will see this widget embedded at the bottom of the page and the words "how would you rate your online experience":



- 2.2 Clicking on a face (green for “good”, amber for “average” and red for “poor”) will then take the user to a pop up box where they are asked to provide any details via free text. The entire process takes 4 clicks from start to finish and can be over in a matter of seconds if the user wishes to leave no text.
- 2.3 There are currently around 630 pages on the East Herts Council website. The vast majority of these have the govmetric widget on them.
- 2.4 Satisfaction ratings are reported every month via the indicator, “overall percentage of good satisfaction ratings”. These are provided to the council’s leadership team, shared via the intranet will all staff, reported every quarter to the Performance, Audit and Governance Oversight Committee and Executive as part of the financial healthcheck document.
- 2.5 **Appendix A** contains performance information from the past two years. Good satisfaction ratings have been below target every month apart from a spike in the spring/ summer months of 2017 and the latest figures from December 2019. These correspond with a substantial refresh of website content in 2017 (when the satisfaction target was also increased from 35% to 50%) and the launching of brand new website in November 2019.
- 2.6 **Appendix A** also contains benchmarking data. The govmetric system is used by over 100 councils nationally and thus provides useful insight. The benchmarking measures are different to the indicator East Herts uses however it is worth noting that satisfaction ratings for East Herts are consistently well below the average. This is in stark contrast to face to face

feedback via the govmetric system where East Herts are consistently well above the average and indeed for the month of November 2019 we were ranked first of all councils using the system nationally.

## 2.7 Analysis

2.8 Govmetric is a powerful means to capture customer feedback and an important part of improving services. It is one of the few tools we have to gather insight on a regular basis. Customers are also able to provide feedback for any face to face interactions in the Wallfields and Charrington's House reception areas and we have recently launched the same option on any emails from customer services. It is worth noting that good ratings for face to face feedback always higher than website ratings (this reflects a national picture and is not peculiar to East Herts). Website ratings are therefore just one component of customer feedback data.

2.9 The website is a useful vehicle for customers to access information, report/ pay for something (eg. council tax) and raise service requests (eg. report a missed bin). The most commonly visited pages are:

- Council tax
- Bin collection and reporting missed bin
- Make, object or comment on a planning application
- Elections (due to the fact that we had 3 in 2019)

2.10 Other useful facts about the website include:

- 2.5m page views in the last 12 months
- Visits largely follow working week patterns (peaks are Monday & Tuesday)
- 85% of visits from 25-64 yrs, 12% 65+, just 3% from 18-24 yr olds
- 2/3rds of visits are via search engines (rest are from

referrals and direct

- 45% of visits are via mobile devices, 45% via desktop and 10% on a tablet

2.11 **Appendix B** contains a more detailed breakdown of feedback from customers. The govmetric system allows customers to provide feedback on specific pages which is useful in terms of analysis. Where appropriate the Communications Team will amend the content and/ or provide feedback to the relevant service.

2.12 General conclusions from **Appendix B** are as follows:

- The number of ratings provided are a relatively small proportion of the overall number of page views
- Ratings are a useful proxy but it is only where free text feedback is given that we can undertake proper analysis of any issues
- A reasonable proportion the feedback is unrelated to website content but more about the customer's general experience of the council (or in some cases about areas unrelated to council business)
- There is a general correlation between a poor rating and leaving feedback. In other words customers are more likely to leave feedback when they are unhappy
- The govmetric system is used by customers to make general service requests and complaints. However these cannot be acted upon unless highly specific details are included
- A reasonable amount of the feedback is useful in terms of finding out where content doesn't make sense, links aren't working etc. In this sense customer feedback is driving direct improvement in the website
- There is a consistent theme of customers wanting to speak directly to someone and not being able to find contact details. To some extent this is deliberate as the website is a means to provide people with relevant

information before they decide to contact us directly. Whilst we do not wish to actively discourage contact we have a general aim towards customer self-service and encouraging people to obtain information themselves where it is already available. In some cases more complex issues will require contact with a council officer but it is equally clear that in some cases customers do not wish to spend time reading web content. Comments about the accuracy and usefulness of content are kept under review but we are still minded to direct customers to the website in the first instance before calling us. In addition at the bottom of each web page there is a "contact us" link which takes customers through to the relevant details for doing so.

- There is variation of satisfaction scores within specific services. Pages related to planning and council tax tend to be less popular. Pages related to licensing, housing and waste tend to be more popular.
- Analysis of the comments related to planning are largely focused on the reliability of the website. It should be noted that this relates to the planning portal which is separate to East Herts Council's website (from which there is a link through). However customers return to the East Herts pages to provide a poor rating when there are challenges. This skews the results and as a consequence the govmetric tool has been taken off this page. This has been replaced with an option to contact us regarding any reliability issues.
- Analysis of the comments related to council tax generally pick up on the limits of what can be done through the website in terms of obtaining information or completing online forms. This feedback is kept under review however in many cases direct contact with the council is needed to resolve issues.
- There aren't enough comments relating to licensing or housing to make conclusions on improving the content. Generally speaking customers rate their experience as

good.

- Analysis of feedback on the waste feedback indicates that most people are happy with the content and generally find what they are looking for.

## 2.13 Going forward

2.14 As well as continuing to report performance every quarter feedback will also continue to be shared within services.

2.15 We are confident that the new website launched in November 2019 will result in continued higher satisfaction scores beyond the one month's worth that is currently available. It has significantly improved the look and feel of the council's website and delivered a more intuitive user experience. It will be important to keep up this momentum to avoid this increase being a spike as per 2017.

2.16 It is suggested that satisfaction scores be kept under review by the Committee and an update provided in 12 months' time.

## **2.0 Reason(s)**

3.1 N/A

## **3.0 Options**

4.1 N/A

## **5.0 Risks**

5.1 N/A

## **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

6.1 No.

## **Community Safety**

No

## **Data Protection**

No

## **Equalities**

No

## **Environmental Sustainability**

No

## **Financial**

No

## **Health and Safety**

No

## **Human Resources**

No

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

No

## **Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

7.1 **Appendix A:** Performance data

7.2 **Appendix B:** Detailed feedback data

## **Contact Members**

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