



Policy and Resources Committee – 6 June 2011

East Northamptonshire Online – Considerations for the future of the portal

Purpose of report

To seek member approval for an alternative solution to the community portals and associated forum. The current arrangement ceases on 31 March 2011

Attachment(s)

Appendix A – Parish Council Users and alternatives

Appendix B – Sample Community Groups and Forums actively using East Northants On Line Portal

Appendix C – Equalities Assessment

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The community portals were introduced in 2003. They aimed to empower local communities to engage in local issues by creating an online community and allow business to advertise to those communities. The aim was in time to create a revenue stream for the portal.
- 1.2 Rutland Online (ROL) solutions are responsible for the development and support of the portal and forum software. This provides the facility for groups and individuals to create their own websites which are hosted on the portal.
- 1.3 Since the introduction of East Northants Online, technology has progressed considerably and the supplier is no longer investing in the current portal. The support for the portal ceases on the 31 March 2012
- 1.4 The portal costs the council £10,000 a year plus significant staffing resources to administer and maintain. This administration includes moderation of the on-line forums to ensure that the content is appropriate for a council sponsored portal. With very limited support to improve or develop the portal both from ROL and from diminished internal resources, further options are required for the future.

2.0 Main uses of Portal

- 2.1 Community portals are used to provide information to the local community. The information can be broken up into the following sections
 - Business directory – Listing of local businesses
 - Group listings – Details of local groups
 - Parish council Information - Minutes, agendas
 - Other local websites
 - Local events and tourism Information

Forum – Local groups

- 2.1 An audit conducted in April 2011 found a large proportion of the information was no longer being updated and the majority of groups now had their own websites or utilised other online technologies such as social media.
- 2.2 There are eight parish councils that are using the facility. The remaining parish councils have sourced an alternative provider or do not have a website.

3.0 Alternatives to the portals

- 3.1 Technology has progressed significantly since the portals were introduced back in 2003. As a result the internet has become more accessible and used by a wider audience.
- 3.2 The introduction of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter has become more prevalent over the years and has developed into a means of communicating with groups and individuals. The current forum groups could take advantage of these tools and, if wanted, gain a wider audience. These tools are all free to use.
- 3.3 There are further alternatives that could be used by local groups :
The council's Local View site which could provide information on the location of groups and clubs and regular activities.
Northants online - For business listings
Find it - For clubs and businesses
- 3.4 There are various free website packages available from sites as such Google, Yahoo and Weebly which could be used by parish councils to create their own websites. These would allow parish councils to have more control over the look and feel of the website and the amount of information they wish to publish.
- 3.5 There are also companies who specialise in the development of parish websites and some of which are already used in the district.
- 3.6 Use of these alternatives would enable communities to continue to develop and maintain their websites and promote the issues that are important to them.

4.0 Considerations

- 4.1 To enable users to migrate their data to a new site they will need access to the current data. This is currently held by the supplier and there may a cost associated with its release.
- 4.2 There are a number of Forum users who are quite active on the current site. Appropriate notice and help will need to be given to these users to find an alternative solution.
- 4.3 There are number of parish council sites that have a large amount of content on their websites. The time and effort to migrate this information will need to considered, along with the amount of resource available at each parish. Parishes will also need to make a decision on the amount of data they want to migrate.
- 4.4 There is now fewer staff within ICT with the time or ability to maintain the portal.

5.0 Equalities and impact assessment

- 5.1 There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation below.

7.0 Risks

7.1 Data Transfer - There will need to be engagement from the software supplier and the data will need to be supplied in a usable manner. The risk is the timescale taken to receive this data and potential cost.

7.2 Council's Reputation - The removal of the portal may create a negative impression of East Northamptonshire council. To mitigate this risk users will have at least 9 months to move their data and will be offered alternative outlets where possible.

7.3 Staffing Resources - There will be significant resources from the Applications Support Team to manage the project and any transition requirements, which may impact other projects.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The use of alternative systems will save East Northamptonshire Council £10,000 per year in revenue.

9.0 Corporate Outcomes

9.1 The corporate outcomes this proposal will help deliver are:
Good Value for Money
Strong Community Leadership

10.0 Options Considered

10.1 The portal is turned off on the 31 March 2012 and the data is given to the relevant parties for their use. Limited support for assisting with the transition may be available, but is not guaranteed.

10.2 To seek a replacement for the current portal. This option was not investigated further as a viable alternative exist for all current users.

11.0 Summary

11.1 Viable alternatives are available for all current users which would not have a future draw on council resources

12.0 Recommendation

12.1 Members are recommended approve the supported transfer of community forums, community groups and parish council from East Northants Online to alternative, non-council, sites with a saving of £10,000 from 2012/13.

(Reason – To reduce costs.)

Legal	Power: Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
	Other considerations:
Background Papers:	

Person Originating Report: Kathryn Rance, Applications Support Manager, 01832 742086					
Date: 11 May 2011					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)

Appendix A – Parish Council Users and Alternatives

Parish & Town Councils using East Northants Online

- Aldwincle
- Collyweston
- Denford
- Easton-on-the-hill
- Islip
- Rushden
- Stanwick
- Thrapston
- Twywell
- Warmington

Alternative Methods

These sites have been created by a 3rd party supplier

Higham Ferrers

<http://www.highamferrers-tc.gov.uk/>

Raunds

<http://www.raunds-tc.gov.uk/>

Example of Parish councils using Facebook and Twitter

Oundle Council

<http://twitter.com/#!/OundleCouncil>

Earls Barton

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=124586127595418&v=wall>

Parish Councils utilising free website providers

<http://www.boxford.org.uk/>

<http://sites.google.com/site/littleshelfordcouncil/what-does-the-parish-council-do>

<http://www.tisbury-wiltshire-pc.gov.uk/>

<http://www.longridgetowncouncil.com/about-this-web-site.html>

Appendix B – Sample Community Groups and Forums actively using East Northats On Line Portal

Collyweston Village Hall

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=2115>

Easton unplugged

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1956>

Jazzercise

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3241>

Thrapston Town Juniors FC

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=849>

Higham Ferrers/Raunds Twinning Association

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1910>

Nene Valley Astronomical Society

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3231>

Collyweston Eco team

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3208>

Collyweston Playing Field Association

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=2252>

Stanwick Bowls Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3207>

Higham Ferrers Methodist Youth Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1566>

1st Thrapston Scout Group <http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1858>

Oundle Town Rowing Club <http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3237>

Oundle Tennis Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=774>

Oundle Horticultural Society <http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3222>

Oundle Gilbert & Sullivan Players

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3019>

Oundle and District Twinning Association

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=776>

Oundle and District Choral Society

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1364>

Nene Valley Probus Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1306>

Mini Mondays for Children

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3229>

Thrapston and Raunds Area Mind (TRAM)

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=2361>

Rotary Club of Thrapston and Raunds

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1597&page=0>

Raunds Woodbine Working Mens Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3120>

Raunds Trodai Karate

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3158>

Mushin Ryo Aikido

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3181>

Hayley Nadine Dance Academy

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3210>

Archers of Raunds

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=2359>

Step and Grooves Dance School

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=2349>

Taekwondo in Rushden

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3133>

St John Ambulance Rushden <http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=2007>

Rushden Folk Dance Club <http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1791>

Rushden Chess Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1587>

Rushden ATC 858 Squadron <http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1137>

Ferrers & Rushden Tennis Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=674>

50+ Adventure Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=484>

Stanwick Races Group

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=2112>

Weightwatchers

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3186>

Thrapston and District Historical Society

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1021>

Middle Nene Sailing Club

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=1398>

Meditation for beginners

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3063>

Dru Yoga

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3062>

Yarwell Village Teas

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3244>

Yarwell Village Hall

<http://www.eastnorthantsonline.co.uk/pp/club/detail.asp?id=3245>



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EIA Initial Screening Form – Committee decision

1. Decision being taken:	
2. Name and Job title / role of person completing Initial Screening:	Kathryn Rance Applications Manager
3. What is the main purpose of the Service or Policy under discussion?	The alternative options to the community portals
4. List the main activities of the Service or Policy under discussion	*Closure of the community portals and forums * Alternative outlets for the information currently on these forums and portals
5. Who are the main beneficiaries of the Service or Policy under discussion?	* Residents of East Northamptonshire
6. How is the success of the Service or Policy under discussion measured?	* Saving of £10,000 per year
7. Are equality monitoring systems for the Service or Policy under discussion in place?	<i>(If yes give details)</i>

8. Use the following table to indicate using a ✓:

- a) Where you think that the decision being taken could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality of opportunity or improving relations within equality groups.
- b) Where you think that the decision being taken could have a negative impact on any of the equality groups i.e. it could disadvantage them.
- c) Where you think that the decision being taken could have a neutral impact on any of the equality group i.e. no impact

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Gender:				
Women/Girls			✓	The disbandment of the portals will affect all groups equally.
Men/Boys			✓	
Transgender people			✓	
Sexual Orientation:				
Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals			✓	
Race/Ethnicity:				
White British people			✓	
White non-British people (including Irish people)			✓	
Asian or Asian British people			✓	
Black or Black British people			✓	
People of mixed heritage			✓	
Chinese people			✓	
Travellers (Gypsy/Roma/Irish heritage)			✓	
People from other ethnic groups			✓	

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
People who do not have English as their first language			✓	
Disability:			✓	
Physical impairment, e.g mobility issues which mean using a wheelchair or crutches.			✓	
Sensory impairment, e.g blind/having a serious visual impairment, deaf/having a serious hearing impairment.			✓	
Mental health condition, e.g depression or schizophrenia			✓	
Learning disability/difficulty, e.g. Down's syndrome or dyslexia, or cognitive impairment such as autistic spectrum disorder			✓	
Long-standing illness or health condition, e.g. cancer, HIV. Diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy			✓	
Other health problems or impairments (<i>please specify if appropriate</i>)			✓	
Age:			✓	
Older People (60+)			✓	
Children and Young People (see guidance for definition)			✓	
Religion/Belief:			✓	
Christian			✓	
Buddhist			✓	
Hindu			✓	
Jewish			✓	
Muslim			✓	
Sikh			✓	

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Other religion (including holding no belief)			✓	
Other Potentially Affected Groups			✓	
Rural Isolation - People who live in rural areas e.g isolated geographically, lack of internet access			✓	
Socio-economic Exclusion – e.g. people who are on benefits, have low educational attainment, single parents, people living in poor quality housing, people who have poor access to services, the unemployed or any combination of these and the other protected strands			✓	
Any other potentially affected groups (<i>please specify</i>)			✓	
9. If you have indicated that there is a negative impact on any group:				
a) Is that impact against legislation?	Yes	No		
b) What is the level of impact?	High	Low		
10. Could you minimise or remove any negative impact that is of low significance?	How?			
11. Could you improve a positive impact of the decision?	How?			
12. If there is no evidence that the decision promotes equality of opportunity or improved relations, could it be adapted so that it does?	How?			
Head of Service signature				

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Date of Initial Screening:		09/05/11		

NOTE

If a negative impact has been highlighted and it is possibly discriminatory and not intended and/or of high impact you must complete a Full EIA.

If not, you should still consider if completing a Full EIA would be helpful in making a thorough assessment.

Full EIA Assessment Form

14. Looking back at the Initial Screening Form, in what area(s) are there concerns that the decision being taken could have a negative impact? (✓ all that apply)	
Gender:	
Sexual orientation:	
Race/Ethnicity	
Disability:	
Age	
Religion/Belief	
Rural isolation	
Socio-economic exclusion	
Any other affected groups:	
15. Summarise the likely negative impacts:	

16. What consultation on this decision has already taken place with groups/individuals from equality target groups?	
17. What does it indicate about the negative impact of this decision?	
18. What consultation will be conducted/is planned on this decision with equality target groups?	
19. Once this consultation activity has taken place, indicate the outcomes:	
20. What consultation on this decision has already taken place with staff - including those that have, or will have direct experience of implementing the Policy?	
21. What does it indicate about the negative impact of this decision?	
22. What consultation will be conducted/is planned on this decision with staff?	
23. Once this consultation activity has taken place, indicate the outcomes:	
24. What relevant research/data/reports concerning the equality target groups have been used in the planning of this decision and what does it tell us about the negative impact?	
25. What research concerning the equality target groups needs to be conducted in relation to this decision?	
26. Once this has been carried out, what does it tell us about the negative impact?	

27. If there are any research gaps, are there any experts/relevant groups that can be contacted to obtain views and evidence on the issues?	
28. Once they have been contacted, what information have we found out?	
29. Is it important that we conduct/commission specific research on this issue? Explain the research required:	
30. If we need to conduct /commission research what are the likely timescales and resource implications / costs involved?	
31. If you require further information, what will you do in the interim to address the negative impact?	
32. List the changes that have been identified which will ensure that the negative impact is addressed:	
33. Have you introduced changes you planned, with any necessary training?	Give details :
34. Does everyone involved in implementing the decision know and understand what you have done?	
<p>Now complete the action planning form which will detail the changes that need to be made to this decision.</p>	



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Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Action identified	Key activity	How will we know this has been achieved? (measures, milestones and dates)	Officer responsible	Quarterly progress update

Planned date for next EIA exercise	
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