

North Yorkshire County Council**Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee****3 December 2018****Parish Portal Update****1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a further update to Members on progress / achievements relating to the Parish Portal.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Members will recall the '100 Day Report' presented to this Committee in December 2017, which outlined progress to date following the portal's go live date of June 2017. From the onset, it was intended that the project was to be truly interactive. As such, even during the developmental stages of this initiative, engagement sessions were held with Parish Councils who actively assisted in the portal's design, taking a 'they said – we did' approach. 'Sound-bites' evidencing this interactive approach are shown in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 What has gone well?

- 3.1 There are 731 Parish councils/meetings in North Yorkshire. At the time of writing, 366 accounts were registered and requests for accounts are still being received. The target was 355 by the end of January 2019 and this has already been exceeded. If 'dormant' Parish Councils / Parish Meetings are also taken into account then this figure is likely to be further in excess of that quoted.
- 3.2 2,807 Service requests have been made since the launch. The target set for activity is 11,000 service requests annually on an on-going basis. Whilst currently short of the target, volumes are expected to increase over the winter period with overall numbers increasing as parish clerks become even more familiar (and confident) with using the portal.
- 3.3 The parish portal includes functionality which allows parishes to access updates added by Highway Officers as opposed to the system-generated updates in the customer portal. Feedback from parish councils about these comments/updates is positive. Training is ongoing with Highway Operations Staff to continue to develop good practice and, as an aside, the customer portal functionality is to be adjusted to also allow such comments to also be seen via that portal.
- 3.4 Positive feedback has been received from those parish councils who are using the parish portal. Feedback is constantly reviewed to continually improve the look, feel and functionality of the portal. An example of this was Parish Councils' comments on email updates, which were causing confusion; this feedback resulted in the removal of all unnecessary notifications and an improved clarity of message being achieved.
- 3.5 Since the last report, parish 'workshops' were held at Area Offices (during the summer of 2018) and were very well attended. These workshops included demonstrations of the portal and how parish councils could get the most from this

system. Feedback from the workshops was very encouraging and these also resulted in many applications for new parish portal accounts.

- 3.6 Members will be delighted to note that the parish portal won an internal 'Innovation Award' and the County Council have also received LGA funding to further develop the "user experience" testing that was employed to involve parishes in the initial design process.
- 3.7 A presentation on the Parish Portal was given at a recent Members' Seminar. Members were impressed with how easy the portal is to use and have subsequently been proactively canvassing / encouraging their parish councils to register and use the portal.
- 3.8 Representatives of the Parish Portal Project Team were also invited to give a presentation at the LGA National conference in July 2018, which was attended by both the Chief Executive and Leader of the County Council. Feedback on the presentation, both at the event and afterwards, was deemed to be 'excellent'.

4.0 Where/How Could We Improve Further?

- 4.1 Consideration has been given to increasing the list of services that can be requested via the Portal to make the portal more attractive to Parishes. Currently we have 5 highway services in the portal that are 'integrated' with the County Council's Highway Asset Management System, Symology. These are Roads, Pavements, Drainage, Vegetation and Street Lighting. This means that we have the mechanism to provide direct feedback to the Parish on any cases they may raise in these specific categories.
- 4.2 However, there is a list of 'Other' services that are not integrated. These include:
 - Boundary fences and walls
 - Bridges and structures
 - Concern about roadworks
 - Kerbs
 - Obstructions, deposits and spillages on the highway
 - Pedestrian crossings
 - Road markings
 - Road safety and speeding issues
 - Signs including illuminated signs
 - Street furniture
 - Surfacing works
 - Traffic signals
 - Unauthorised activity
 - Winter maintenance
- 4.3 Currently there is no mechanism for highways to provide direct feedback on any of the above fault types, but we can further develop the functionality of the portal to include the above. As an organisation we need to work with Parishes to understand what other services they would like to see accessed in the portal and work with services areas to deliver these.

5.0 Benefits Realised

5.1 Ultimately, the portal provides a better experience for the parish and allows for more self-reliance. Some of the most recent feedback received includes the following comments:

- *'It is easy to use and straightforward if you had a standard reporting issue'* - Shipton-by-Beninbrough/Linton on Ouse Parish Council
- *'Getting help was easy and it was dealt with very quickly'* – Warlaby Parish Council
- *'The map where you can pinpoint the exact location of the complaint and see other reported items'* – Hustwaite Parish Council

5.2 Appendix 2 to this report shows some of the hard and soft benefits being realised. These include notable potential financial savings as well as reduced time in responding to defects raised. This is in addition to the improved operational effectiveness, customer experience and customer satisfaction which the existence of the portal brings.

6.0 Next Steps

6.1 It is proposed to continue engagement with parishes in order to maintain use of / ensure increasing numbers sign up to the portal, but also consider further developing the portal based around the following subject areas:

- Extend the number of services available through the portal.
- Reduce the number of non-integrated services.
- Review parish feedback and continually refine the product
- Work with Members to understand how they can benefit from the information in the parish portal (and the customer portal) to understand reported and resolved issues in their divisions
- Work with Members to further increase the number of parishes registered and the number of service requests received through the portal.
- Potential development of a Members' Dashboard, which would allow vision of all parish portals registered in their Division without the need for Members to register for every individual parish.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any financial implications arising from the recommendation. It is the view of officers that the recommendation will not have any financial implications, indeed there is a financial benefit to be derived from the increasing success of this initiative - see Appendix 2. However, this will involve further application of the principle of 'invest to save' if the steps outlined in Para 6 are progressed.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any legal implications arising from the recommendation. It is the view of officers that the recommendation will not have any legal implications in respect of the County Council's role as both highway and road traffic authority for North Yorkshire

9.0 Equalities Implications

- 9.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any equalities implications arising from the recommendation. It is the view of officers that the recommendation will not have any equalities implications, therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required and a copy of the EIA screening form is attached as Appendix 3.

10.0 Recommendation(s)

- 10.1 It is recommended Members note the content of this report.

DAVID BOWE

Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

Author of Report:

Nigel Smith – Head of Highway Operations

Deborah Flowers – Highways Customer Communications Officer

Sarah Foley - Customer Service Centre / Customer Programme Manager

Background Documents:

Parish Portal '100 Day Report', December 2017

APPENDIX 1 – EVIDENCE OF INTERACTIVE DEVELOPMENT

Our customers help build features

Parishes wanted did not want to use their email as their login name.

We created users the ability to create their own user name to login with.

Parishes told us that they often submitted lots of cases, but were struggling to tell them apart in the back end.

We gave Parishes the ability to create their own case reference numbers, so that they can identify cases in their own way.

Parishes needed to know the outcome of the reports they submit so that they can tell their citizens.

We developed integration directly into the highways system, so that Parish Clerks can see the highways officer reports.

Parishes told us that they need to be able to report back at meetings on progress of submissions, but that they do not always have an internet connection.

We created an export functionality on the reports, Parishes can now create reports and export them to take to Parish Council meetings.

Benefits in detail

Hard Benefits

- **Reduction of emails into the Highways Area Office teams releasing capacity due to the reduction in need to follow up emails.**

Based on current data and projected trends, the estimated annual savings for admin upload are:

2018-19: £5,765.76
 2019-20: £9,118.56
 2020-21: £12,439.08

- **Reduction in the number of inspections needing to be carried out following a report, because of photo upload.**

Based on current data and projected trends, the estimated annual savings for photo upload are:

2018-19: £7,496.80
 2019-20: £17,450.18
 2020-21: £62,703.71

- **Reduction in response time to defects for customers.**

Previous to the Parish Portal, response time from a Highways Officer following an inspection took up to 20 working days on average from the submission of a defect. Now, the average response from the submission of a defect is 5 working days following an inspection from a Highways Officer, whose report directly feeds into the Portal.

Soft Benefits

- Improved customer satisfaction from Parish Clerks through the ability to serve the public with relevant information at parish meetings.
- Improved operational effectiveness as photographs of potholes allow officers to locate potholes in the street effectively when out on inspection.
- Improved customer satisfaction through the ability to read highways officer notes through the Portal to better understand the reason of follow-on action taken.
- Improved Internal experience through the ability to deal with issues through the use of photos and ability to pin point location on map through photo.
- Improved reputation of the council through provision of solutions requested by the customer.
- Assisting the local authority to achieve in positive engagement with customers to meet the requirements for grants provided by DfT.



APPENDIX 3 – EIA SCREENING FORM

Record of decision that Equality Impact Assessment is not required		
Directorate and service area	BES, H&T, Highway Operations	
Name and contact of officer(s) taking decision that EIA not required		
Nigel Smith, Head of Highway Operations		
What are you proposing to do?		
Update Members on progress with Parish Portal		
Why are you proposing this?		
To provide information on the successes achieved to date and further developments		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources?		
No, short term further time investment required. Long term should improve self-service		
Will this proposal change anything for customers or staff? What will change?		
Improved opportunity for self service		
Will the proposal make things worse for people with protected characteristics (age, disability, sex, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership)? No (Customers, staff etc). No		
How do you know? Do you have any evidence to support your assessment?		
If there might be a negative impact on people with protected characteristics can this impact be reduced? How?		
N/A		
Could the proposal have a significant negative impact on some people with protected characteristics or a less severe negative impact on a lot of people with protected characteristics? If “Yes” more detailed analysis should be undertaken and an EIA completed.		
No		
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities (e.g. disabled people’s access to public transport)?		
No		
Could the proposal have a greater negative impact on people in rural areas?		
No		
Could the proposal have a worse impact on people with less money?		
No		
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics?		
No		
Do the answers to the previous questions make it reasonable to conclude that there will be no or very limited adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?	Yes	
Will there be no or limited adverse impacts on people in rural areas?	Yes	
Will there be no or limited adverse impacts on people in rural areas?	Yes	
		No

Further analysis and full EIA Required		
Decision not to undertake EIA approved by (Assistant Director or equivalent)	<i>Barrie Mason</i>	
Date: 13 November 2018	<i>14/11/18</i>	