

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

Report of Lady K Fisher, Executive Member for Environmental Wellbeing and Communications to the

Cabinet: April 5, 2011

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides information which will enable members to discuss and decide whether the council should procure GovDelivery to complement the council's new website.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the council approves Option 1 which entails:

2.2 Approving the procurement of GovDelivery to complement the council's website but not taking up the option of allowing customers to receive information through SMS messaging.

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 In January 2011 the council launched its new website as part of its Digital and Social Media Development Strategy which was approved by council in March 2010.

3.2 With the launch having proved a success, and the new website having achieved its objectives of making information accurate and quick and easy to find for the user, the council now needs to build on this achievement.

3.3 As a result officers have been looking at "bolt on" products which can easily be added to the website to improve the user experience further and aid in the one of the website's main functions - to reduce the number of calls to the council's customer contact team.

3.4 One product which will achieve both of these aims is GovDelivery.

3.5 Gov delivery is a software as a service system which allows customers to receive information on the specific council services they are interested, in the format they want, as and when it is available. It also allows the council to automatically populate its social media feeds with this information, thus saving some officer time when it comes to managing the council's social media output.

3.6 The system basically allows the council to deliver frequent, timely and relevant messages to users in the format they wish to receive them. As users simply sign up for the information feeds through a portal on the council's website the system increases customers' ability for self service and will reduce, and in many cases eliminate completely, their need to contact the council in other ways. Because of its self-service nature and ability to deliver messages to customers in the way which best suits them GovDelivery also has the potential to increase the council's reach by getting

information to residents who may not regularly receive it through the council's existing channels.

3.7 GovDelivery is already used by numerous council's and government departments throughout the UK and U.S.A and in Norfolk is currently used by both Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council.

3.8 It should be noted that although the system allows for the sending out of information via SMS messaging it is recommended that the council does not utilise this option. This would substantially increase the cost of the service (see the finance section below for pricing) and would also move the service away from being a fixed costs to one for which a large budget were needed to ensure there was no overspend should a large amount of messages be sent out in a single financial year.

3.9 Another reason for rejecting the SMS option is that with the increasing use of Smart Phones such as Iphones and Blackberrys, people are able access their email remotely thus increasingly negating the need for SMS messaging.

3.10 Consultation work conducted by the council shows there is a demand for the type of service offered by GovDelivery. Below is an extract from the social media survey conducted by our consultation officer in April 2010.

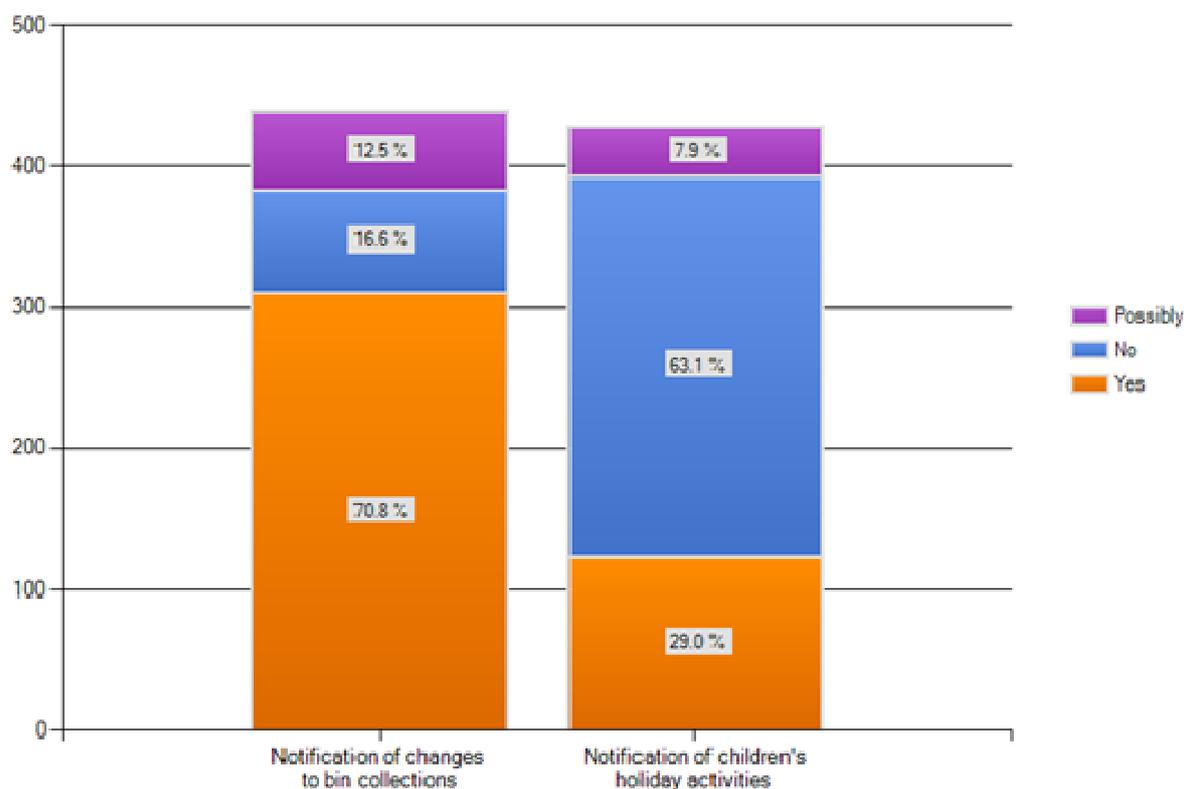
“Interest in text or email alerts

Respondents were asked if they would like to sign up to text and email alerts. Whilst fewer respondents showed an interest in text alerts (although 24% would like text alerts re bin changes), there was a very high level of interest in receiving email alerts.

Email alerts: 71% of respondents said they'd like to receive email alerts about bin collection changes, and 29% said they'd like email alerts about children's holiday activities.

Although text alerts are currently an expensive way of communicating with a large number of residents, emails are inexpensive. “

Would you sign up for EMAIL alerts to your home computer about council services you were interested in? For example, notification of changes to bin collection, or details of children's holiday activities?



4 Options and recommendation

4.1 Option 1 – Recommended

4.1.1 The council agree to the procurement of GovDelivery to complement the council's website but to not take up the option of allowing customers to receive information through SMS messaging. The budget for this option to be found from within the existing budget of the Communications Team as detailed in the finance section of this report.

4.2 Option 2

4.2.1 The council agrees to the procurement of GovDelivery to complement the council's website and chooses to allow customers to receive information through SMS messaging. The Council's agrees to increase the budget for Communications by £12,000 to allow for 120,000 SMS messages a year. This equates to two text messages a month for 5,000 people. The budget for all other costs associated with GovDelivery found from within the existing budget of the Communications Team, as detailed in the finance section of this report.

4.3 Option 3

4.3.1 The council chooses not to procure GovDelivery at this time.

4.4 Reasons for Recommendation of Option 1

4.4.1 GovDelivery is a bolt on product which will further enhance the council's digital output and play a part in reducing the number of calls to the council's customer contact centre, the average cost of which is £5.19 per call. Consultation has shown it is a system which residents would value and use and it is possible to find the money for this option out of existing budgets.

5. Risk and Financial Implications

5.1 Risk

The recommendations do not carry any risk

5.2 Financial

5.2.1 A one off set up fee of £2,500

5.2.2 A monthly cost of £699 which equates to £8,388 per annum.

5.2.3 The cost of SMS messaging is £500 for every 5,000 messages sent. At this stage it is impossible to know how many messages would need to be sent out as this would depend on how many people sign up for the service. Also, the council is unable to predict the nature of events in the coming year e.g. an inclement winter etc.

5.2.4 If it is estimated that 5,000 residents sign up for the service and each of these receive one SMS message a month then the total annual cost of providing SMS messaging would be £6,000.

5.2.5 It would be the council's hope that, in time, the service would be utilised by more than this number of people and that the volume of information going out would exceed more than one message per month. As a result, should members wish to take advantage of the SMS facility it would be prudent to set aside £12,000 in the first year.

6 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

7. Other Implications

a) Equalities:

b) Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998:

c) Section 40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006:

d) Human Resources:

e) Human Rights:

f) Other: [e.g. Children's Act 2004]

8. Alignment to Council Priorities

GovDelivery will provide another channel through which the Council is able to communicate to residents about how it is delivering against all council priorities.

9. **Ward/Community Affected**

Affects all wards

Background Papers

Digital and Social Media Development

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Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

This is not a key decision