Finance, Smart City & City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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Title:	Website Update
Report of:	Aruj Haider
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Smart City www.westminster.gov.uk/cabinet)
Wards Involved:	All / Specific
Policy Context:	…
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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on plans to improve the Westminster City Council website to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our residents and businesses.

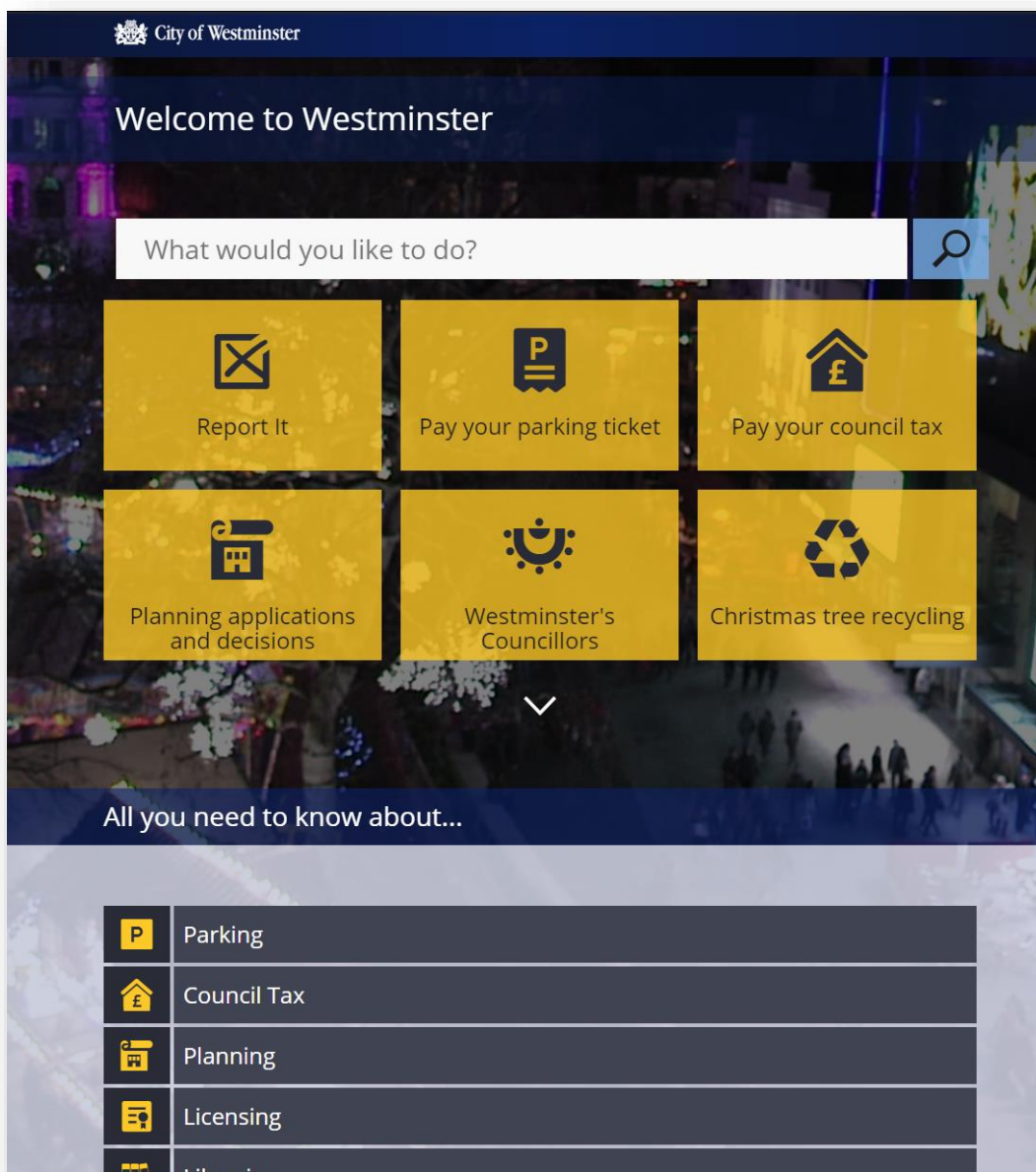## 2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

The committee are asked to provide a view on the following:

- The committee are asked for the views on the aims of the website strategy, outlined in this paper
- The committee are also asked for their views on the success measures stated both in the website strategy and the online mystery shopping.
- The committee are further asked for their views on personalisation and how they see this aligning with the council's strategic objectives.

3. Background

In 2019 a decision was made to rethink and modernise the Westminster City Council website. There was a pressing need to provide residents, businesses and visitors with an intuitive, simplified and streamlined online experience. The vision was to completely overhaul the website, turning it into a seamless site that puts the user first and 'knows you like a friend'.

2019/20 website homepage
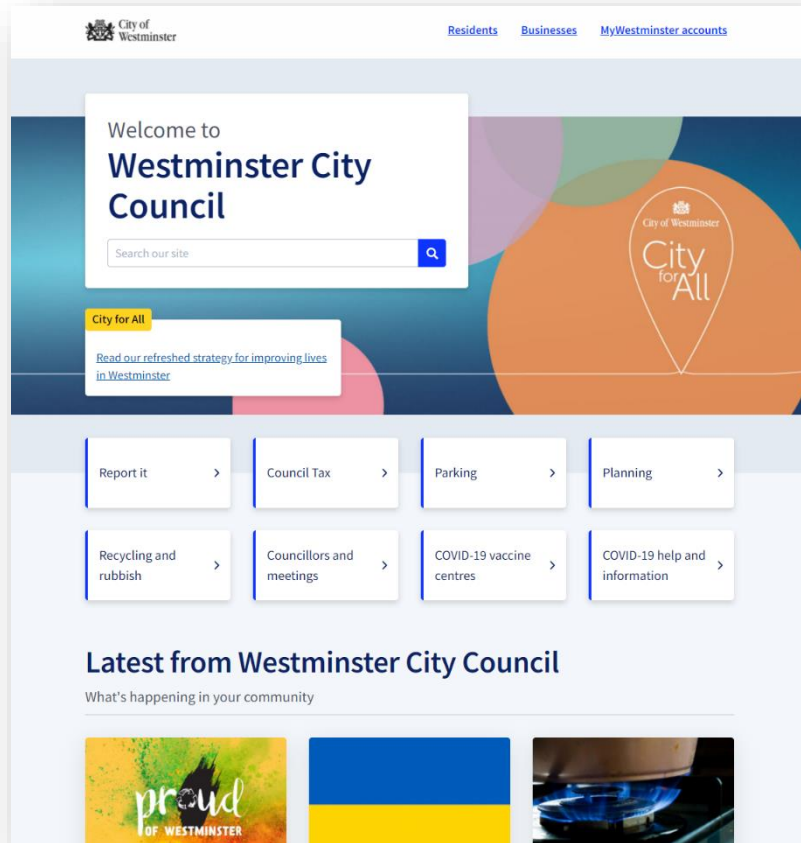
2019/20 Council tax page

Following an in-depth discovery phase, providing insights and recommendations, a new website was launched in January 2021. The site introduced a new design, structure and an improved overall user experience. It was created on open-source technology, shared with other local authorities, including RBKC.

Project highlights include:

- Co-designed with users
- Content re-written and rationalised
- Enhanced accessibility
- Introduced a reliable, intuitive content approach from a template/look and feel perspective
- Embed best practice in digital content, from Plain English to enhanced SEO and appropriate use of imagery

Westminster.gov.uk has been completely redesigned and is now based on a future-proof platform. As with all websites, we need to keep improving it in line with our understanding of user needs and business objectives.

2021/22 Homepage (current)

2021/22 Council tax page (current)
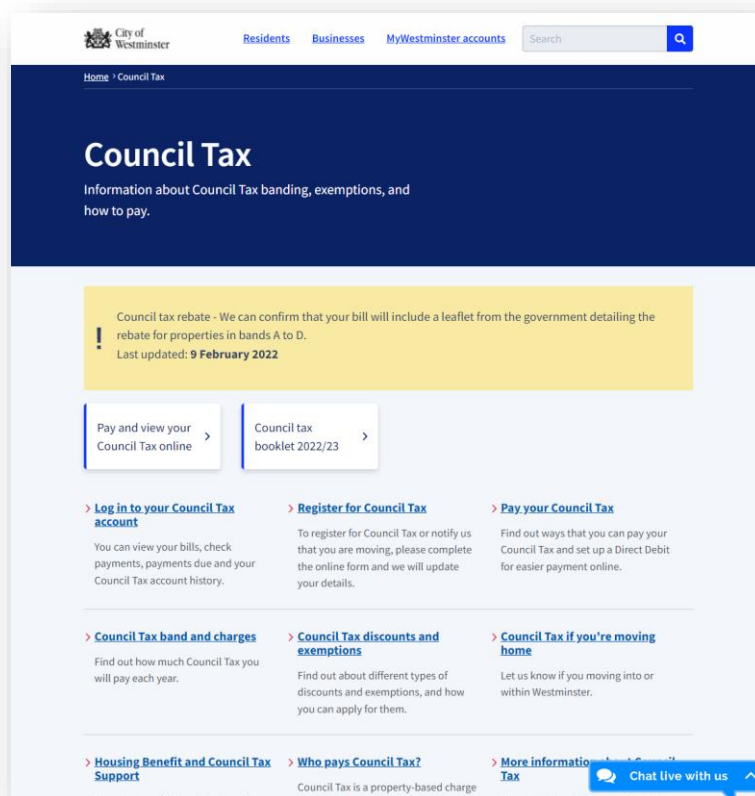
Traffic to westminster.gov.uk has been steadily increasing, as more services go online, and microsites are migrated to the main site.

Westminster.gov.uk monthly page views (last 12 months)
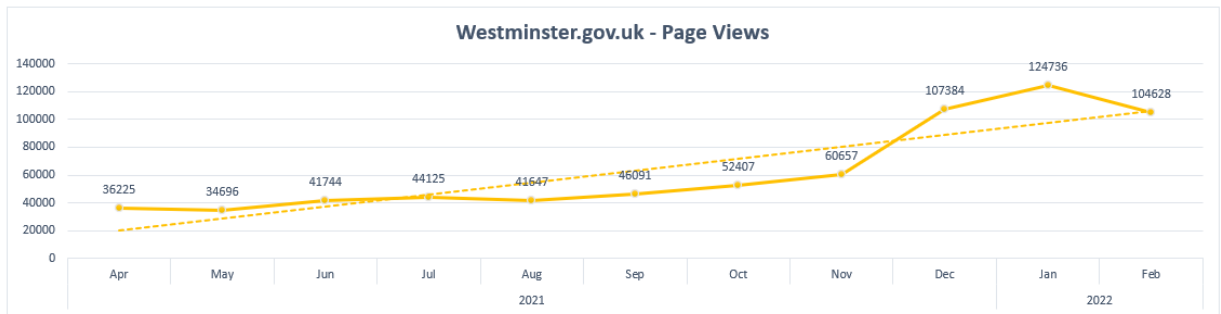
This traffic does not include visits to microsites and it is difficult to measure customer journeys across multiple sites. It is also not possible to measure traffic on some microsites.

The City Save microsite was migrated to westminster.gov.uk in January 2022. You can see the corresponding uplift in traffic on the chart below (and also above)
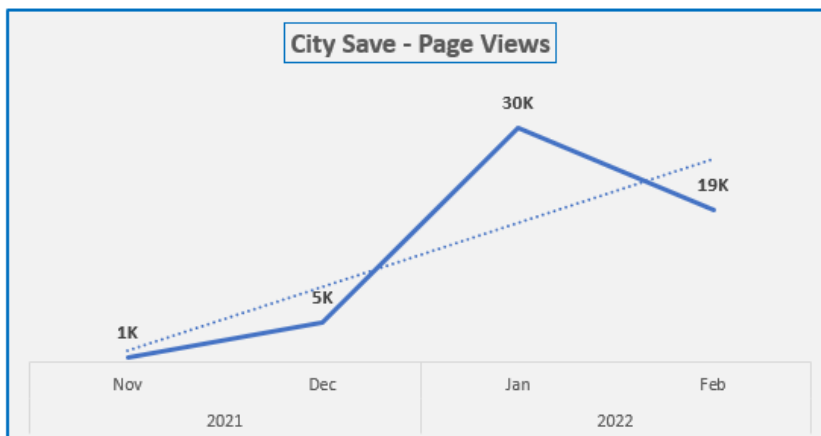
The Active Westminster website will be migrated in 2022.

4. Website strategy

A strategy for westminster.gov.uk was created to help govern the website. The strategy covers what the website is for, who it is for, and how success is measured.

4.1 What is westminster.gov.uk for

Westminster.gov.uk is designed to:

- Provide accurate and timely information and advice that is useful to our customers

- Deliver online services that benefit our customers

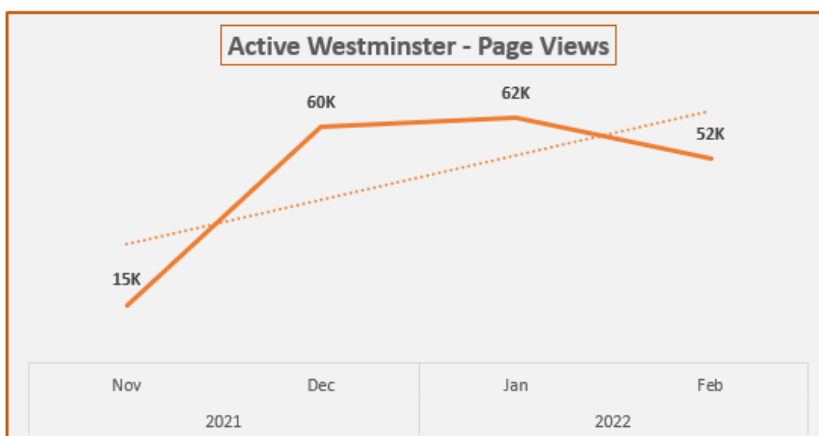- Encourage action to fulfil strategic objectives e.g. engage digitally, self-serve, work for us

- Clearly explain the role of the council and the services we provide

- Demonstrate the impact on the City and its residents, of policy, services and activity

- Fulfil our statutory obligations e.g. transparency, governance, democracy.

4.2 Who is westminster.gov.uk for

The primary audience by far for westminster.gov.uk are Westminster residents. This is a hugely diverse audience. To meet their needs, westminster.gov.uk must always be simple to use by everyone and accessible to all. Businesses are the secondary audience and there are other important, but much smaller audiences including:

- Visitors

- Media

- Professional audiences seeking information

- Partners and Councils

- Staff and elected officials

Some specific services and campaigns will identify more specific audiences (age, location, occupation). It is important to meet the needs of these specific audiences as well.

4.3 What should westminster.gov.uk do (and not do)

Westminster.gov.uk should only provide information and services that our customers can reasonably expect the council to be responsible for. If another source or service can best meet customer needs, we can signpost and link to it. Westminster.gov.uk should be the home for all content and services (rather than microsites) unless there is compelling evidence that doing so would be detrimental to the customer.

We should have the capability to quickly signpost users to services associated with the council but not delivered on westminster.gov.uk e.g. other central and local government services as well as charity, education and partner services.

Westminster.gov.uk should not contain content or services that do not meet a customer need or fulfil a statutory requirement, nor should it contain content or services that are already provided by an appropriate alternative source.

4.4 How do we measure success

A number of new measures have been introduced to measure the success of the website. These include:

- Compliance with Government Service Standard - New online services will be assessed against the Government Service Standard

- Accessibility - Compliance with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and laws.

- Microsite consolidation - Microsites that move to westminster.gov.uk have higher utilisation and engagement and lower costs

In addition, we will shortly be introducing measures that can be validated with users as we move forward:

- Task completion rate - 75% of users should be able to complete tasks successfully, unaided, first time (tasks include both information needs and online transactions).

- Net Promoter Score - 75% of users rate westminster.gov.uk as 30 or higher (great or excellent) on the Net Promoter Scale (NPS)

To deliver this strategy, we are adopting a continuous improvement approach, making small changes at pace. In addition, we will identify areas where we can innovate or apply best practice to drive improvements and create blueprints for exemplar services.

5.   Continuous improvement

As with all websites, we must keep improving westminster.gov.uk in line with our changing understanding of user needs and business objectives.

5.1 Mystery Shopping

In December 2021, an online mystery shopping exercise was conducted. Usability tests were carried out with 40 London-based individuals. Customers were asked to attempt a range of tasks on our website, using their own computer or phone.

For this initial round, tasks were chosen from a range of services areas and service types to provide broad coverage across the website. Services included were:

- Adult Social Care - Find out about social care assessments

- Libraries & Leisure - Find a specific book & Book baby rhyme time

- Children & Families - Find out about free childcare

- Births Deaths & Marriages - Find out citizenship ceremony costs and guest numbers, Replacement birth certificate costs and delivery times

- Parking - Find blue badge parking in a specific location, Find out about skip licences in residents parking bays

- Council tax - Find out a council tax band and cost

- Democracy - Find your councillor and find out what they do

- Transport & Streets - Report a missing manhole cover

The tests were recorded and analysed to produce a list of recommendations. Example recommendations included adjustments to the navigation and menus, amendments to the site search, minimising journeys to microsites, Improving the layout of numerical information e.g. tables. Some layout changes to provide key information nearer the top were also recommended as well as changing the names of some links to better reflect user expectations. Other content changes and reducing the number of choices/links on some services pages to make it easier for users to find the most relevant links were also included.

Online mystery shopping is going to be a regular activity, with a further round of testing due to be conducted in early March 2022. As this process matures, specific measures we are able to introduce use-validated measures to assess website performance against the website strategy.

Measures will include:

- Task completion – did the customer find and understand the information or complete the transaction.

- Time taken – elapsed time can be a useful indicator of how easy a task is to complete. Here, we will be capturing it in order to establish a baseline, with the aim being to reduce average times by making tasks easier.

- Net Promoter Score (NPS) - customers will be surveyed after attempting tasks using a Likert scale (agree/disagree) to provide a qualitative measure of customer experience.

This will provide both quantitative and qualitative measures of performance in line with our website strategy.

5.2 Personalisation

Modern day websites exceed user expectations by offering a personalised experience which is tailored to their needs. By implementing personalisation we can offer users a holistic and integrated service that not only meets, but also exceeds their needs.

Personalisation creates an opportunity to build trust between the council and our service users. This is true especially where the increase in digital services can sometimes be viewed as less human and personal. Our services must, as a priority, work for the user and it is therefore imperative to be cautious and use technology responsibly – to build trust and make sure users feel safe in their online interactions.

We are exploring two methods of personalisation, implicit and explicit personalisation.

Explicit personalisation is where we know who the user is. Usually, this is because they are logged in to the website e.g. using their MyWestminster account.

Implicit personalisation is where we don't know exactly who the user is, so we make assumptions about them based on the information available e.g. pages visited, time on site, search terms used etc..

Both methods use information about the user to tailor the services offered.

5.2.1 Implicit personalisation

We are currently developing a simple proof of concept, designed to test our technology and to provide a customer experience that we can learn from.

We have recently closed the City Save microsite and this is now hosted on westminster.gov.uk. We are using City Save for this proof of concept, with the underlying technology being re-usable across westminster.gov.uk. For this proof of concept we are introducing dynamic content, so that the offers on the page

refresh with each visit to the page. The premise is that visitors to the City Save page are interested in money-saving offers, and the greater variety we can showcase without additional effort from the user, the greater the chance of the user finding an offer that meets their needs.

Once live, we will monitor the effectiveness with a view to measure and understand if more offers are viewed than the previous, static version.

Currently, the level of personalisation is defined only by the page the user visits. In future, we can go further, by understanding more of the users' attributes to offer them something even more personal e.g. offers that are near their current location. This is next level of maturity to explore if this initial concept is successful. If our ambition is to fully exploit implicit personalisation, then further investment in additional software and development would be required.

City Save Personalisation
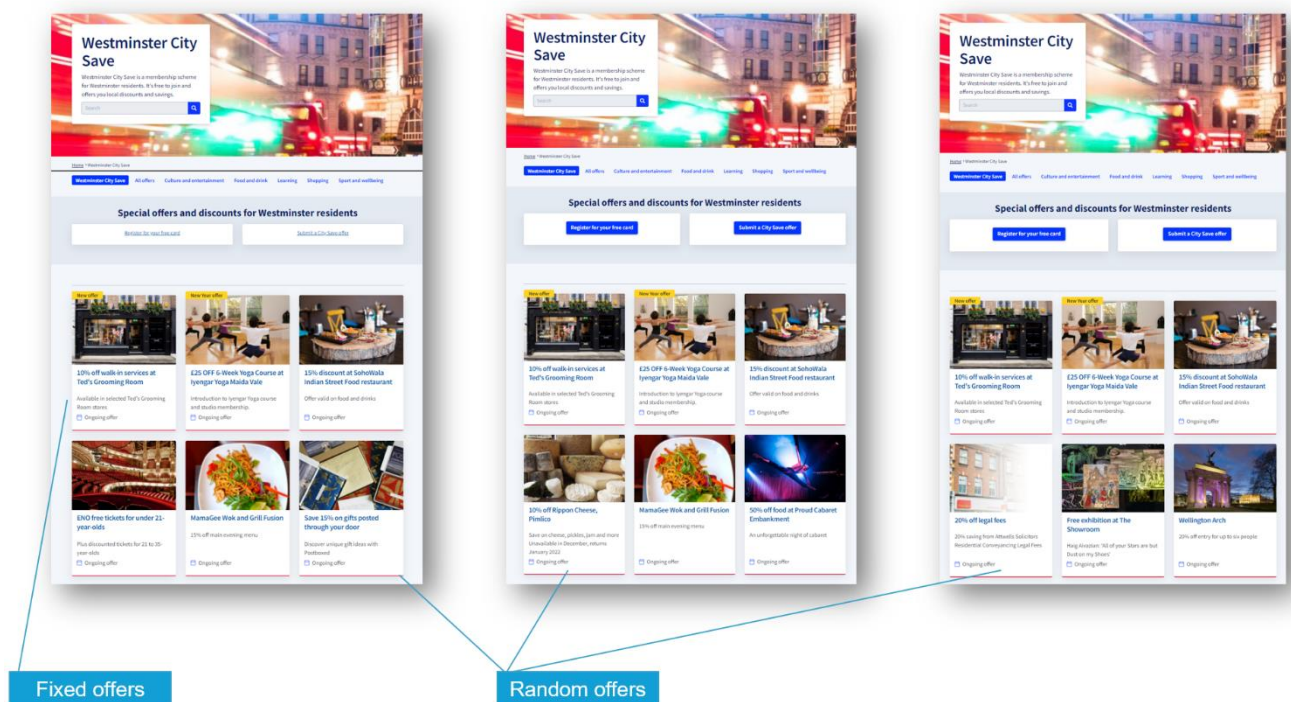
5.2.2 Explicit personalisation

Whilst implicit personalisation is already being piloted, explicit personalisation is just starting to be explored. As part of the upcoming phases of the MyWestminster and Digital Card project, we are defining the scope for explicit personalisation.

There is great potential to improve our service to customers. A possible use case could be:

A parent registers a birth and opts in to receive emails and to allow re-use of their data for other services. We are then able to send them emails about our services (and partner services) relevant to a parent with a young child e.g. childcare, nurseries and library events. Over time, we can offer them early years services,

leisure activities, City Save offers, then school admissions, free school meals and more. We can also offer complementary or promotional services e.g. re-usable nappies, community groups, sustainable travel. Not only can we promote these services, but when the user consumes that service we can re-use their data, making it very convenient for the customer. We can also make use of the joined-up data in new ways e.g. fraud detection or safeguarding and prevention.

This is just one scenario, but the principles apply across many services. Through the eyes of the user, the principles can be:

- Inform me about relevant services and offers

- Let me know about services, when I need to know about them

- Make it easy for me to sign-up to new services

- Give me control and visibility of how my data is used

The potential benefits to the customer are many, and we intend to work towards this. We are already thinking about the technical architecture, processes and controls that need to underpin this way of working.

There are substantial technical dependencies, including establishing mechanisms to create and manage a single customer record.

There is also a need to map the range of user personas, and their journeys through our services over their lifetime as a customer. Whilst the challenge is great, the benefits are clearly worthwhile.

5.3   Roadmap

Mystery shopping is rapidly becoming a key tool for improving the website and personalisation will be an opportunity to significantly add value. These activities do not stand alone but form part of a wider roadmap:

User Centred Design

- Government Service Standard – the first new service has passed an assessment

- Recruiting a customer testing pool to ensure availability of real users with which to conduct research and testing

- Mystery shopping

Forms

- Developing a strategic approach to forms platforms and appropriate uses and improving design consistency

Features and technical improvements

- Search improvements – better results for popular search terms

- Future-proofing the underlying technology, improving security and creating the opportunity for personalisation

- Personalisation

Design (UI/UX)

- Improvements being made to layout and appearance, based on recommendations from mystery shopping

- Content guidance is being updated to make sure new transactional services use a human and friendly tone and voice

Example of proposed design changes
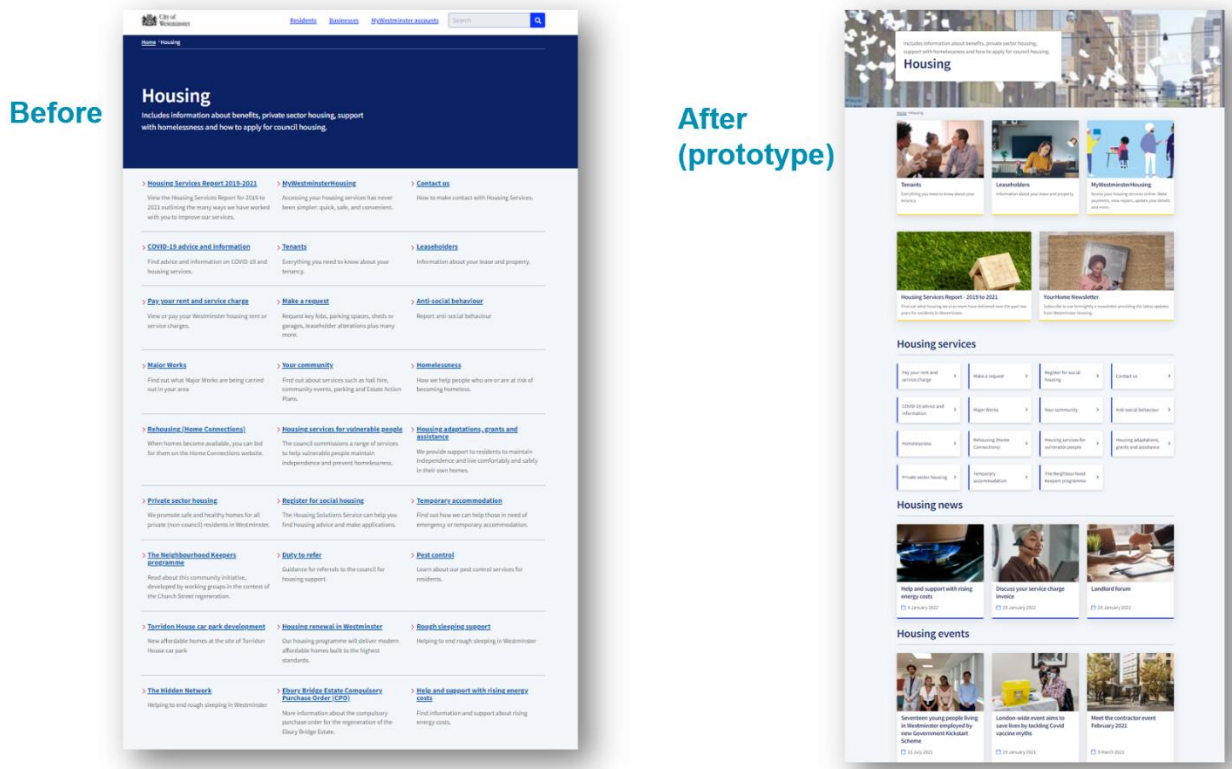
Microsites and apps

- Reducing the number of microsites to improve customer journeys

- Discovery exercise to assess viability of a MyWestminster and Digital Card smartphone app

Accessibility

- Accessibility processes are being improved to ensure appropriate assurance is in place to ensure services work for everyone

- Procuring expert support

Performance measures and analytics

- Web page feedback tool added to most pages to quickly and simply capture customer feedback

- Improvements to our analytics reporting

The table below illustrates the indicative timeline for the above activities.

Workstream	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
1 – User Centred Design	Online Mystery Shopping (ongoing)	Service Assessments (ongoing)			Setup customer testing pool			
2 – Forms					Tech approach	Process	UX dev	
3 – Features and technology	Search	Drupal 9	Search	Personalisation pilot		Explicit personalisation		
4 – Design (UI/UX)	Content Guidance				Design system updates			
5 – Microsites and apps	Process / Strategy			MWDC App discovery		Migration (12 months)		
6 – Accessibility	Process improvements					Call-off contract partnership in place		
7 – Performance and analytics	Page feedback		Analytics review					

6. Innovation

Our ambition is to design online experiences to meet our customers needs. Our website is a critical part of this online customer experience, and we want it to be simple to use and become the preferred option for customers to find information and services. We want our website to be 'so good that our customers prefer to use it', consistently.

However, our website is part of a wider digital ecosystem. Whilst the majority of our content and information is on westmsinter.gov.uk, some is on microsites, but that number is reducing, allowing us greater control of the customer experience. When is comes to transactional services, our digital ecosystem is much more complex. Transactions are provided by numerous 3rd party systems and platforms, to varying degrees of success. Sometimes the customer journey can be rather fragmented, making is difficult to meet ours and our customers' expectations.

Increasingly, we are taking control of our online experience, through innovative initiatives such as mystery shopping and personalisation. Through the MyWestminster and Digital Card project, we take even more control over the online experience and make things simpler, more intuitive and exceed our customers' expectations.

It isn't just innovative ideas and services though. We are also adopting best-in-class practices and processes such as Government Service Standard assessments to provide quality assurance and expert accessibility services to ensure no one is disadvantaged. We are also changing the way we work to across our teams to provide the right levels of user focus, service design and agile service delivery.

The council provides a vast range of services, underpinned by numerous technology solutions. This makes it difficult to do everything at once. Consequently, this year we will be looking to take our combination of best practice and innovation to help us establish our digital ecosystem and understand the blueprint for great online services going forward.

7. Next steps

The City Save personalisation pilot will launch at the end of February and, if successful, this feature will be rolled out to other suitable services. We will then look to improve the capability to enable more advanced features.

As we develop our online experience roadmap in the coming months (Apr – Jun), we will look to:

- Define the technical architecture for explicit personalisation
- Identify an exemplar service that can become the blueprint for future services (this service will likely take advantage of explicit personalisation)

And, of course, we will continue to improve our website based on our understanding of our customers' needs and our business objectives.

8. Addendum - MyWestminster and Digital Card Update

In 2018 a task group was established to investigate the barriers to cultural engagement to investigating the benefits of the smart card scheme that had already been established in other local council services and how Westminster could benefit from a digital card scheme. Additionally, in 2019, analysis conducted by CED, revealed that WCC's online offerings are managed by 43 systems and microsites of which 1f5, require users to log in. This creates inconsistent designs, technical debt, disconnected journeys, and duplicate data entry that contribute to poor user experience.

Accelerated by the pandemic, the need and demand for seamless, intuitive, and digital services that can protect vulnerable residents and supporting local businesses became critical. MyWestminster and Digital Card project originally started in early 2020, with a discovery phase.

As part of the commitment, the Council aimed to introduce cutting edge technology through a new resident portal via MyWestminster thereby reducing multiple logins, create seamless user experiences and providing a digital card.

Following an evaluation, Netcompany was chosen to build both the digital card offering and the associated frictionless enrolment capability. It was vital that the chosen technology solution aligned with the Councils desire to adopt a new vision of approach, with capabilities to roll out reusable components to other parties in the future. Providing the (reusable) core building blocks for all future digital projects – ensuring that the thousands of manual transactions processed annually by the Council across all services could become digitalised using this investment and benefit from savings now and in the future.

The aim of the digital card is to:

- Protect vulnerable users by facilitating access to local services, benefits, and discounts

- Protect local businesses through increasing resident's purchasing power (e.g., Westminster City Save)

- Increase social inclusivity by allowing vulnerable groups, to be able to gain non-stigmatised access to services they might not otherwise use, such as discounted leisure activities or peer-to-peer connection with local volunteers

- Minimise face-to-face and call centre administration by allowing users to register once to use multiple services (e.g., register at a library and then be able to use city save or leisure services in later iterations)

As set out in our customer experience and digital strategy, as a flagship Council we are committed to providing an intelligent, intuitive an exceptional experience for accessing all council services through a single-entry point. Both improving the experience for communities and offering a digital for all solution that offers value and becomes the preferential choice for communities.

This product is designed to support:

- Westminster's City for All commitment to ensure customers choose to use our digital services and to design our services to meet customer needs and to be as inclusive to all residents as possible

- The Customer Experience and Digital Strategy commitment to transform the way our customers interact with the council making it easy for them to find the information and services they need to improve their lives.

- Deliver a seamless user experience for our borough residents, streamlining multiple physical cards, to one digital/smart card solution for both iOS and Android devices. Using existing customer data, it was important integrity is maintained, and the project added value in building this as part of the long-term master data: golden record vision.

We are investing not only in a new process but also a new technology and approach. WCC is committed to is delivering a truly customer focused platform, designed for mobile from the ground up so that users get the best online experience.
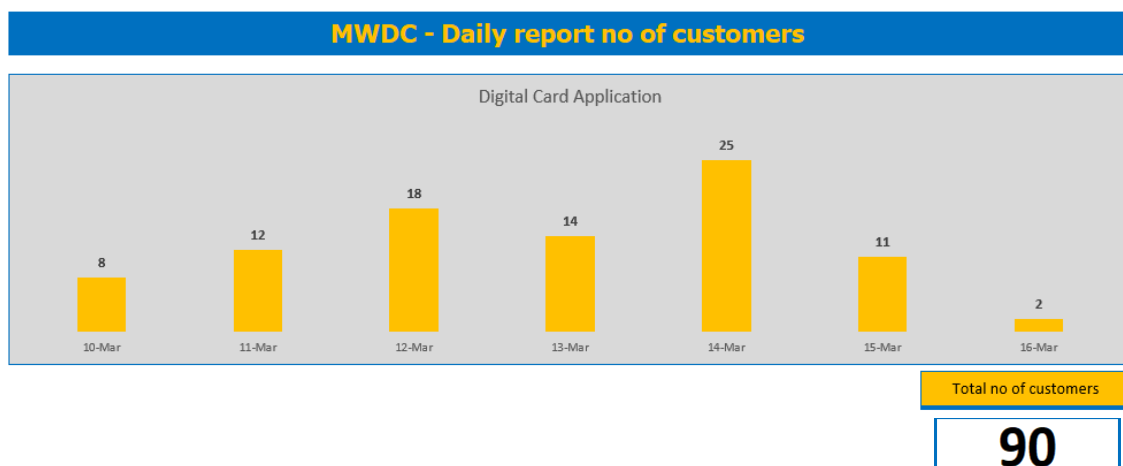
The MyWestminster portal successfully launched on the 10th March 2022 and is a single digital space for residents who will only need to register their details once to then gain access to multitude of services including libraries and City Save. The portal prevents residents from having to continuously prove their identity to gain access to different services and save vital time as residents will not need to physically visit a location to collect their membership card.

Once details are registered, residents can download a digital card and save it in their Apple Wallet or Google Pay. This will increase digital footprint. For residents who do not have a smart phone, they can continue to use their physical cards, however most residents will be encouraged to transfer their details to the digital platform.

MyWestminster portal will initially offer library and City Save services. Other WCC services such as access to Housing, Adult Social care and leisure centres will be added at later dates.

The MyWestminster portal is a key part of the Smart Cities roll out and it is an essential project to showcase the exciting elements that bring residents and technology together. The MyWestminster portal will be presented as a new Smart City initiative that complements its bigger picture, so residents understand that MyWestminster portal is not a stand-alone project. This is especially important given the wide spectrum of Smart City's activities including the Christmas Elves AR experience and air quality monitors.

Daily MyWestminster and Digital card registrations since 10th March launch (correct as of 10:00 16/3/2022

MWDC - Daily report no of customers

Digital Card Application

10-Mar	11-Mar	12-Mar	13-Mar	14-Mar	15-Mar	16-Mar
8	12	18	14	25	11	2

Total no of customers

90

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Martin Chaney
mchaney@westminster.gov.uk