

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> An update on work being undertaken to improve camden.gov.uk	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Chief Experience and Information Officer Executive Director Corporate Services	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b>  The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b>  14 November 2023
<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b>  This report outlines the current performance and work to date and ongoing to improve the camden.gov.uk website.  <b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b>  No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.  <b>Contact Officer:</b>  Louise Brown, Head of Digital Products and Services on behalf of Tariq Khan, Chief Experience and Information Officer 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG  Telephone: 020 7974 6020 Email: louise.brown@camden.gov.uk	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>  That the Committee notes the contents of the report.	

Signed: Agreed by Jon Rowney, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

## **Purpose of Report**

The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee has requested an update on the council's work on the Camden.gov.uk website and the work being undertaken to improve design and performance.

### **1. Background and research into camden.gov.uk performance**

#### **1.1. Context**

The camden.gov.uk website is the digital “front door” through which residents, visitors and businesses access information about the council and services available to them. Every month around 70,000 people (some could be the same person on a phone and separately on a laptop) use camden.gov.uk for a total of 150,000 sessions (separate occasions accessing the website).

Since the last website redesign in 2018 – when it scored well in terms of customer satisfaction – the current website's user experience has gradually deteriorated through a mixture of changing technology, devolved content governance, and growing expectations from citizens to access information and services online.

We also see significant numbers of people calling our contact centre after trying and failing to access information via the website. In September 2023, for example, 19% calls to the contact centre (approximately 5,000/28,000 calls) were made after the customer had tried to use the website, 10% tried to get their action done online and 7% were unable to find the information they needed.

Alongside, this we must uphold standards of accessibility required by law (Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018) and always seek to improve the ongoing management of the functionality, performance and environmental impact of our digital estate, of which camden.gov.uk is the main asset that we manage.

#### **1.2. Team Changes**

The team responsible for the website design and management was reorganised in 2021. Roles now include less generalist “web officer” roles, instead containing more standard expert roles and skills such as content and product design, web analytics, product management, user research, delivery management and front-end development.

#### **1.3. Insight from Citizens**

To better understand what citizens found most frustrating, we initially introduced a simple, 3-question survey on the site.

Top 3 complaints were:

- Things not working as expected
- Difficult/impossible to find things
- Things to do (process) not clear enough

Satisfaction score was 2.1 out of 5

- something not working - 25%
- poor findability or missing information - 24%
- unclear process – 18%

We also surveyed 150+ users to understand the top tasks that they were attempting on accessing the site in order to best understand our citizens' priorities and how to organise information effectively.

We audited the content of 1.5k pages to understand where we might be able to cut content and commissioned external web analytics agency One Further and the RNIB to better understand and implement how we evaluate and monitor our site for performance and accessibility.

#### **1.4. Ongoing qualitative research**

Since the team was established we have spoken with over 50 residents and business owners at different times, sharing designs as we developed them and getting feedback on information architecture (navigation and labelling) and other specific areas of the site. Our aim is always to ensure diversity in all senses from our panels, with social tenants, businesses, disabled residents, carers (those accessing on behalf of others) and those for whom English is not their first language represented. We are regularly recruiting residents for testing both via the website and more specifically with help from our Contact Camden teams to ensure we maintain representation from the whole of our Camden Community.

## **2. Design improvements underway**

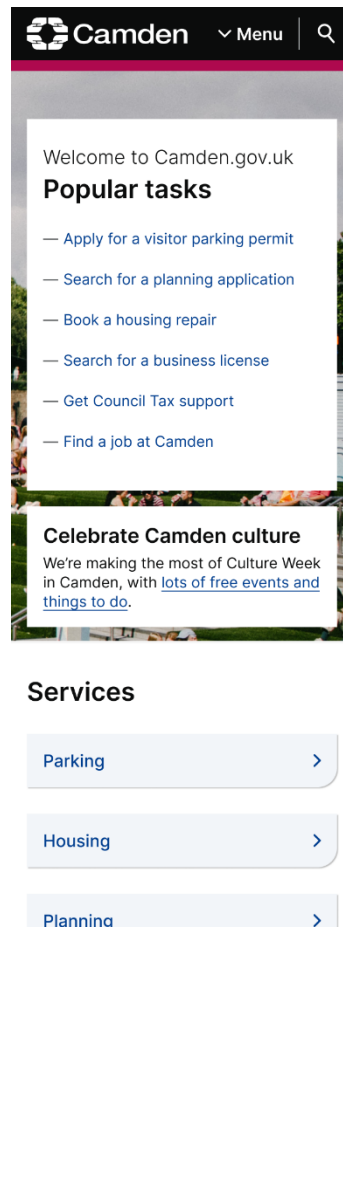
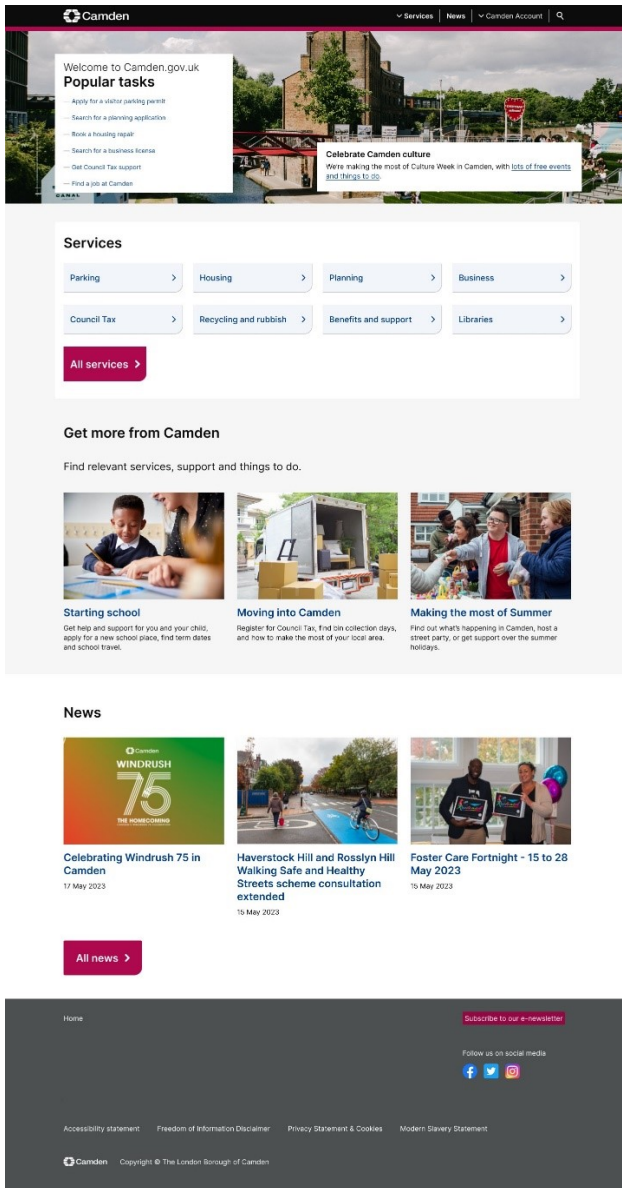
### **2.1. Design system established**

From the insight gained, our design and front-end development team have developed patterns and code that can be reused across multiple systems to create a consistent visual and interactive designs and standard, tested code. The design system templates have been tested with many residents and businesses and heavily utilise patterns that will be familiar with citizens from the likes of gov.uk and NHS websites thus making them more usable and less expensive for Camden to develop.

Using a design system with tested code such as this also means less ongoing effort to ensure accessibility of our pages and ensuring that the pages are not resource intensive (costing more for Camden to store, using more energy and data to download).

This will be the start of a more unified experience across our digital estate. The image below shows how the homepage will look on mobile and desktop.

New designs are always designed and developed tested on desktop and mobile with mobile usage now accounting for over 50% of user sessions.



## 2.2. Content redesign and governance

Alongside the visual design, the content design team have been rewriting, restructuring and improving content across the site with an initial focus on our highest priority journey (mostly measured by the amount of users accessing online). The published improvements are designed to help citizens better find, understand and access information in areas such as Universal credit, Council tax support and permit applications amongst many others.

An example of the impact of this work can be seen with the reorganisation of content on the Benefits page resulting in 85% more engagement from users of the pages (more people clicking links through to information rather than leaving the page) and a significantly reduced reading age, in some sections from 14 to 7 years old.

Changes to the cost of living pages saw a similar uplift, with the number of users engaging with the webpage increasing from 50 to 87%, and a reading age of 17/18 reduced to 9 years of age.

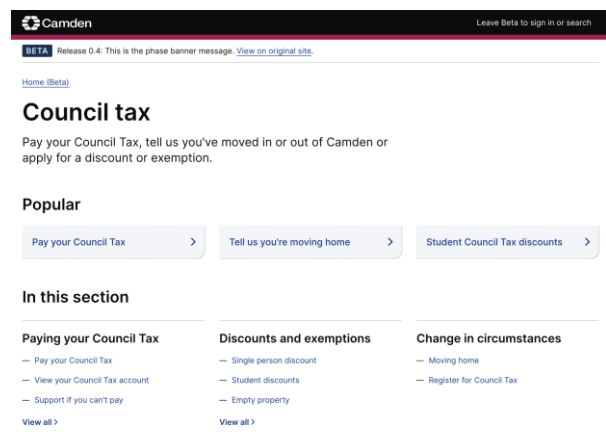
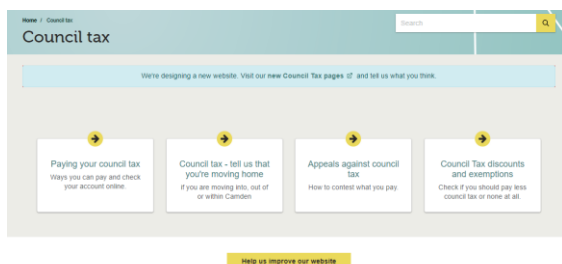
An important change to maintain the quality of content being added to the site is content governance. Site changes are now largely made by the content design team themselves. This frees up service team members no longer needing to update their own pages and enables higher quality, consistent content to be produced. Teams who require urgent updates or have expertise such as the news and communication teams will retain access.

## 2.3. Trialling new designs at scale

We created a beta version of the Council Tax section of the website using our new design system and new development environments that could be accessed by the public alongside the existing pages. We ran multiple tests, studied analytics and ran surveys with very good results:

- Readability and accessibility were much improved
- Task completion was faster
- Satisfaction scores increased (homepage from 43 to 62% satisfied, and specific pages such as “how to pay” from 35 to 99%)

Side by side comparison of old vs. new designs for council tax pages.



### **3. Launching the redesigned site**

#### **3.1. Rebuilding the site**

We are now in the process of redesigning around one thousand pages of content across [camden.gov.uk](https://camden.gov.uk) based on these designs which we hope to go live this calendar year (2023). This requires extensive testing and an upgrade of the technology that will support the new design and will result in approximately 48 hours of limited functionality on the site (we are hoping to be able to schedule for late November, currently held up by platform provider issues).

As part of the redesign, our technical lead has also introduced many new ways of automating testing to ensure ongoing good performance, availability and accessibility.

### **4. Outcomes**

Our aim is to better serve our citizens with faster, more efficient information and services alongside enabling data evaluation and regular insight to better understand needs, problems and behaviours.

#### **Primary**

- More residents wanting to use the site for more reasons etc.
- More returning users
- More tasks completed first time – faster, easier transactions
- Higher user satisfaction
- More time spent positively engaging with the council
- Fewer bugs – fewer support issues
- Faster deployment of updates and improvements

#### **Longer term**

- Actionable insight from user behaviour across our digital estate
- Reduced customer service time
- Reduced technical cost
- Reduced environmental impact

#### **4.1. Assets**

This work has given us building blocks for Camden's future success across our digital touchpoints - a design system with standards and style guides that can be implemented across our digital estate by internal and external teams and frameworks within which to measure the effectiveness of our design work going forward.

#### **4.2. Evaluation**

With more accurate data and the ability to garner regular feedback and research insights we can continue to monitor engagement to ensure that changes we are making are having a positive impact.

Top line figures such as “returning users” will be monitored alongside individual areas, such as the examples given in the design sections above.

## **5. Equalities Impact and Disability considerations**

Digital inclusion is a core reason why we must make these change to the website.

The accessibility audit commissioned with the RNIB found over 71 issues that need correcting affecting multiple pages and areas of the site. Work is ongoing to correct those with a large number fixed by the redesign (others are with partners to correct and are ongoing).

Our work to improve digital accessibility means that our redesigned webpages will be easier to use with assistive technologies such as screen readers and at high magnification levels. By simplifying the language on the site we make each service more accessible to more of our communities including those for whom English is not be their first language.

## **6. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

This paper provides an update on the work to improve [camden.gov.uk](http://camden.gov.uk). There are no financial decisions or risks to note within this paper.

## **7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

No comments made by the legal team.

## **8. Environmental Implications**

The newly redesigned page templates are using less energy to store and be retrieved than their counterparts than current designs but there are limited tools to accurately measure the exact environmental impact so far. Our new design patterns also reduce the use and file size of images which will also be something of benefit to the carbon footprint of the website. This is an important issue for all of our technology that we will continue to monitor.

**REPORT ENDS**

