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KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 2023/082

Committee:-	Council
Date:-	17 th January 2024
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Town Clerk
Report Title:-	Website hosting
Wards Affected:-	All

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval for delegated authority to be given to the clerk, in conjunction with the chair of Finance and Governance Committee, to procure a new website hosting arrangement if necessary.

2. Recommendation

Council is recommended to delegate the task of procuring any new website hosting arrangement to the clerk, in conjunction with the chair of Finance and Governance Committee, where the timetable for doing so does not permit for reports to Council or Finance and Governance Committee.

3. Information

- 3.1. The Council's website is currently hosted by 2Commune, who are based in Leicestershire, and who are one of the larger providers of website services to town and parish councils in Northamptonshire and beyond. On 5th January 2024, they advised that they are obliged to cease providing this service from 31st March 2024, as a consequence of a dispute with their technology supplier.

- 3.2. Whilst the supplier of the technology, Cuttlefish, has confirmed that they are willing to assume the hosting arrangements from 2commune, at existing costs, this has only just been received and their ability to do so satisfactorily is so far untested and no contract has yet been shared.
- 3.3. The Council potentially therefore must find a new website host and transfer all the website material to its new website in the next 10 weeks. It will be doing so at the same time as several hundred other parish councils. Given that the timetable is tight, it is requested that the clerk be given delegated power to procure a new system, in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Governance Committee if that is necessary. Where the timetable allows, authority will be sought from either full Council or Finance and Governance Committee, but this additional flexibility will be essential to keep up the momentum.
- 3.4. Whilst there are plenty of potential suppliers out there, the scale of 2Commune's current business and its withdrawal might test the ability of the market to respond, particularly regarding data transfer. It might be necessary to separately procure someone to help with the data transfer if the chosen host cannot do so in time.

4. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

- 4.1. The Council must have a website to fulfil its statutory duties on access to information, financial reporting and access to public meetings. The website must be fully accessible to meet the equality and disability legislative requirements. Quite apart from that, the website is a key tool in communicating what the Council is doing and promoting events, and as a means of booking for markets stalls, events and submitting grant applications. The website is also linked to social media accounts to avoid the need to double key information.
- 4.2. The cost in 2023/4 for website hosting was £460. Any staff training required was an additional cost, as are making any temporary or permanent changes to the design of the website. The original cost of setting up the current website was £2500. Only £550 has been allowed for in the budget for website provision, so it is likely that an overspend will be incurred within the larger support services budget if a new website is required.
- 4.3. Initial discussion with alternative providers indicates a build cost of £2000-£3000 including data transfer. The Council will need to seek formal quotes from three providers to meet its financial regulations. Annual hosting costs will be broadly similar to those in place now.
- 4.4. There will be additional call on staff time to manage the procurement, agree a design and model for the website and oversee data transfer. Unfortunately, this will occur at



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the same time as the end of year accounts are prepared so there may be as yet unidentified impacts on the Council's wider programme of work.

5. Policy and climate change implications

The Council cannot function at all without a website so it is imperative that one is in place by the end of March 2024.

Background Papers

Email from 2Commune 5th January 2024

Email from Cuttlefish 9th January 2024

Material from alternative suppliers 7th-9th January