Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

20 March 2024

Update on the Development of the MyWilts Potholes Reporting Functionality

Executive summary

To inform the Environment Select Committee improvements made to the MyWilts application to provide more information to the public when a case is closed.

To further make the Environment Select Committee aware of the roadmap for the planned improvements to the MyWilts application moving forward.

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to:

   a. To inform the Environment Select Committee improvements made to the MyWilts application to provide more information to the public when a potholes case is closed.

   b. To further make the Environment Select Committee aware of the roadmap for the planned improvements to the MyWilts application moving forward.

Background

2. The current MyWilts application was created in 2018 under the Digital Programme to replace the previous MyWiltshire application. This work, undertaken by Microsoft, was intended to address issues with the then MyWiltshire application and to provide a platform on which the council could add additional services so expanding the digital offerings to Wiltshire's residents.

3. In the latter stages of the MyWilts development process it became apparent that a parallel stream of work was being undertaken by the Highways team to procure a line of business system to support the work of the Highways team. The team ultimately selected a highway asset management solution called HIAMS from a company called W.D.M. Limited, this came complete with a public facing application that allowed the public to submit highways related cases directly into the HIAMS line of business system.

4. This created a dilemma with the MyWilts project as the functionality for handling Highways related cases was within the scope of the MyWilts application.

Ultimately due to time constraints a decision was made to use the HIAMS customer interface for highways related cases and link the two systems together so that Highways case data was passed to MyWilts so that all case data would be held in one place and that one system be used to notify the public of progress on their cases. This link was not ideal as it left the public with two different user experiences, for highways cases and non-highways cases, and led to complexity around citizen authentication with CitizenID.

5. MyWilts was released to the public in September 2020 and all code and supporting materials passed to the council for ongoing maintenance and upgrades moving forward.

6. Both members and the public have expressed frustrations with MyWilts, in particular where pothole cases are concerned. Some complaints have been around the user experience where, as noted above, it does not match the rest of MyWilts and the method by which the two applications are linked is unwieldy. Currently HIAMS does not have the necessary interfaces to provide a more seamless experience as it is accessed. There have also been complaints from the public where they need to provide their logon credentials twice once to access MyWilts and again when accessing HIAMS when reporting highways related cases. Whilst HIAMS uses the same user credentials as MyWilts it does not have a mechanism to accept the previous authorisation created when the resident logged onto the MyWilts application, hence the duplicate request to provide their credentials again. Finally we have had significant complaints with regard to pothole cases being closed without a clear reason being given why this was the case. Again this is partly down to what information is fed back from HIAMS to MyWilts and subsequently sent ack to the resident

Main considerations for the committee

Improvements to the current MyWilts Application

7. To inform the Environment Select Committee that on the evening of Thursday the 14th of December ICT implemented a change to the MyWilts application to provide improved email responses to the public with regard to highways cases submitted by them. This has been achieved by producing a new template that provides more information to the public when a case is closed by extracting additional commentary created by the Highways engineers reviewing potholes cases from the Highways line-of-business system HIAMS and adding this information to the information sent by MyWilts in the email response to cases raised by the public.

8. We chose to focus on updating the email templates in highways cases, specifically focusing on improving the communication to the public in regard to the status of their pothole cases due to the adverse feedback we had received. The previous email template suggested a member of the public to log in to MyWilts to see the full update information on their case and only included the basic case status within the email itself. This was causing issues with the public receiving emails stating 'Case closed' without the full information as to why being immediately obvious to them, for instance, their case being closed as it was a duplicate of an existing case or where their case did not meet intervention levels for repair.

9.   The updates to the email template now include the full case update information within the email removing the need to login to MyWilts and providing the customer with the information required to give context to the case update.

10. This work was undertaken as part of the ongoing MyWilts recovery plan.

Roadmap for the replacement to the current MyWilts Application

11. In the longer term we are creating a replacement for MyWilts based on more modern, standard web technologies. As noted above the current MyWilts application was originally written by Microsoft for the council back in 2018 and an ICT development team have taken responsibility to upgrade and enhance the application since then.

12. MyWilts as currently built comprises three code bases, one each for the web version, the Apple smartphone version and the Android smartphone version. Continuing to update these three code bases is an inefficient use of ICT development teams time and due to this and the legacy design and technical issues with the current MyWilts application, ICT have decided to cease further enhancement to the current MyWilts and create a brand-new replacement for the MyWilts application.

13. This work is in the early proof-of-concept and design stages at present but the new MyWilts is planned to be released sometime in 2024.

Environmental impact of the work

14. There is no direct environmental impact to updates to the current MyWilts application nor in the creation of its replacement however indirectly the use of digital channels by the public have less of an environmental impact compared to either phone calls or worse, visits to council offices.

Equality and diversity impact of the work

15. There is no direct equality impact to updates to the current MyWilts application nor in the creation of its replacement nor does this work discriminate in providing services and employment.

16. It is worth noting that the replacement for the MyWilts application will, as a matter of course, need to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 as mandated by the UK Government whereby services must achieve WCAG 2.2 level AA as part of meeting government accessibility requirements.

Risk assessment

17. Other than public perception, there are no additional risks with regard to the ongoing maintenance of the current MyWilts application.

18. The creation of the replacement for the MyWilts application is under normal ICT project governance including the creation of a risk register to ensure any risks are identified and managed as the project proceeds.

Financial implications

19. The costs for maintenance of the current MyWilts application and its replacement are covered under the current ICT capital budget.

Legal implications

20. There are no legal implications with regard to the maintenance of the current MyWilts application or its replacement.

Conclusion

21. The Environment Select Committee are asked to note the improvements made to the MyWilts application to provide more information to the public when a case is closed.
22. The Environment Select Committee are further asked to take note of the roadmap for the planned improvements to the MyWilts application moving forward.

Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cabinet Member for Governance, IT, Broadband, Licensing, Staffing, Communities and Area Boards

Report author: Mark Tucker – Director ICT
Tel: 01225 718614
Email: mark.tucker@wiltshire.gov.uk