

PFCC Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

Report reference number: 128-21 Classification (e.g. Not protectively marked/restricted): Not protectively marked
Title of report: PFCC Website Technical Support
Area of county / stakeholders affected: Countywide
Report by: Liane Edwards Date of report: 19/08/21 Enquiries to: darren.horsman@essex.police.uk

1. Purpose of the report

To gain agreement for Formation Media to provide hosting and support for the PFCC website, Violence and Vulnerability Website and Restorative Justice Website including regular testing, updates to maintain navigation functionality and ensuring the correct level of accessibility.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the PFCC agrees to Formation Media providing website hosting and maintenance and support and rectification of issues to maintain functionality and accessibility levels of the PFCC website, Restorative Justice Website and Violence and Vulnerability Website for a period of six months. During this period we will review the service level and undertake a procurement exercise for a longer term contract.

It is recommended that the PFCC agreed to the allocation of £4,900 for this service between October 2021 and the end of March 2022. £2,400 of this cost would come from the Communications budget to cover the PFCC website, £1,250 would come from the Restorative Justice Budget to cover the Restorative Justice Website and £1,250 would come from the Violence and Vulnerability Budget to cover the Violence and Vulnerability Website.

3. Benefits of the proposal

Currently the PFCC website, Violence and Vulnerability website and Restorative Justice website do not have a service level agreement or maintenance/retainer package in place and any issues identified are handled on an adhoc basis by Viewpoint Marketing. As such there are no contractual service standards in place. This creates a risk that the

website may fail and take a prolonged period to fix or the standards of accessibility and functionality will fall and not be identified and corrected.

This has resulted in issues arising such as plugins not working, videos not playing and vital updates to the web platform not being installed. The proposal for Formation Media to take on hosting the website and delivering regular testing, updates and support will ensure the website is fully functional and facilitates a positive user journey that complies with our accessibility obligations.

This will support the three sites for six months and provide us with a useful assessment of the actual benefits of this agreement while we undertake a procurement process to identify a supplier to provide this support on a regular basis.

4. Background and proposal

The PFCC website was built in 2015 and restructured and modified in 2017 to align more closely with the current PFCC's strategic programme. Six years on it is due for a review as the site has developed and grown to include the Fire & Rescue Service as well as the addition of a considerable number of board papers, tables and transparency data.

A Restorative Justice subsite was developed in 2019 which, while integrated into the PFCC website, sits on a separate platform and has a secondary direct URL to support direct engagement with victims of crime. In 2021 the Violence and Vulnerability Programme also developed their own website as part of their communications programme.

During 2020 the PFCC's office undertook a considerable amount of work to align the website to the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. This highlighted the need for ongoing regular maintenance, support and testing to ensure all websites relating to the Commissioner continue to deliver the levels of accessibility and functionality expected.

Part of the proposal is for the provider to conduct a UX (User Experience) review of the websites which would include a report from trained UX designers, developers and testing on functionality issues and required generic improvements to be made on the website. The test would include problem scenarios whereby the user will search and navigate the site to assess how easy it is to use. The findings from the review would then be used in the UI (User Interface) design of the homepages and structures of the websites. Formation Media would also undertake analytics reviews to look at the most popular pages to define the navigations hierarchy and information structure. This would enable us to significantly optimise the websites without the considerable cost of a rebuild.

SLA

There is currently no service level agreement in place meaning that regular technical maintenance of any of these websites is not being routinely carried out and if the websites were to suffer a significant fault there would be no contractual obligation on any provider to fix this. By having an SLA in place, it will provide the following:

- Check installed server updates

- Installation of additional software to help service provider perform maintenance and improve website performance and security
- Production of a dedicated maintenance pack
- Uninstalling plugins that risk potential security flaws
- Weekly Bug fixes
- Ticketed support within an agreed time frame of 0-2 hours during business hours

Hosting Site

Business Continuity/Security – all servers under Formation Medias hosting control have a backup procedure in place to reduce and safeguard against loss of data. By switching our current hosting site under Formation Media, daily backups would be performed which will give more security than is currently in place. By hosting the platform it will also make it simpler for Formation Media to manage system maintenance. Formation Media are used by other PCCs and have a good level of reassurance around their data handling procedures.

Ongoing Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance includes account management and reporting and the maintenance option also includes four hours of web development each month which can be used to develop website pages, surveys for the Police and Crime Plan, precept and graphics which is currently paid for on an adhoc basis. This would contribute to our overall work as an office and contribute to the costs anticipated on specific projects such as the development of our precept proposals.

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

Prior to submitting this proposal, we talked to a number of similar PCC offices around the country as well as local partners to identify possible suppliers who could provide this service. We researched a number of these to understand the type of service they could offer and their suitability to this work. This included Viewpoint Marketing and other local firms. Formation Media came highly recommended from other PCC offices and understood our role and in particular the importance of providing open, transparent decision making. They were also the only organisation that were able to provide a full accessibility review without having to subcontract this to a specialist provider.

Since undertaking this review of our providers we have contracted Formation Media to undertake an accessibility review and fix identified problems. This work was carried out well and we were satisfied with the product provided and the level of service.

Having selected our preferred provider we also considered a number of options for the structure of the support we wanted and the level and type of service we would enter into.

We could have decided to continue without the UX (User Experience) review, hosting, SLA and maintenance/retainer package and continue on an adhoc basis but this would risk the website not benefiting from understanding the user journey and not being able to optimise the website navigation and content. It also presents the significant risk that a problem would arise with the website and prove very costly to fix and take a considerable amount of time. Additionally, without an SLA to provide the technical support, updates would remain outstanding, the hosting platform would not be adequately supported and the functionality of the website would risk becoming impaired with issues such as plugins and downloads no longer working.

6. Police and Crime Plan

The three websites communicate what we do, what we deliver and what we aspire to and is an important way for the Commissioner to engage with the public, stakeholders and partners. This is vital for both the Police and Crime Plan 2016/2020, the extension for 20/21 and the new plan for 2021/2024.

7. Police operational implications

There will be no impact on operational policing.

8. Financial implications

The financial costs of contracting this support for the six-month period are as follows:

- The total for hosting 3 websites £600
- Quarterly Maintenance for 3 websites £800
- SLA £1,500
- Maintenance/Retainer £2,000

Total £4,900

The costs are split between three budgets in recognition of the focus of the three sites, their size, complexity and anticipated required support work. £2,400 for the PFCC's website would come from IT support budgeted for within the Communications and Engagement Budget. £1,250 from the Restorative Justice budget to cover the Restorative Justice website and £1,250 from the Violence and Vulnerability Unit for their site.

9. Legal implications

The impact of functionality issues could result in plugins and downloads not working which means users with impairments may not be able to access documents and downloads in line with the accessibility requirements that came into effect on September 23rd 2020.

10. Staffing implications

There are no direct staff implications involved in this proposal.

11. Equality and Diversity implications

This will have a direct positive impact on equality and diversity as ensuring the website operates optimally so it can be used by as many people as possible in the way that adequately meets their needs.

12. Risks

If this decision is not agreed we risk failing to meet our obligation of being transparent, open and of fulfilling our commitment to keeping the people of Essex informed.

13. Governance Boards

This has not been discussed at governance boards.

14. Background papers

n/a

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the OPFCC Chief Executive and Treasurer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O. Sign:*D. Horsman*.....

Print:Darren Horsman - Deputy MO.....

Date:20.8.2021.....

Chief Finance Officer / Treasurer Sign:*Julia Berry*.....

Print:Julia Berry.....

Date:20.08.2021.....

Publication

Is the report for publication? YES NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

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If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet? YES NO 2. Of Appendix? YES NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

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Date redaction carried out:

Treasurer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Please continue to next page for Final PCC Decision and Final Sign Off

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 23 August 2021

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: