

ISC15D018

Title: *Web Update*
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Issue

An update on the availability and performance issues with the University website and actions taken to resolve them.

Recommendation

Recipients are invited:

- To note the update.

Resource Implications

As described in the paper.

Risk Implications

It is essential that the University's website is accessible and stable, not only so that pages can be maintained by staff, but also so that visitors including potential students can find information about the institution.

Equality and Diversity

The University website content meets W3C standards for accessible content.

Timing of decisions

Timing are discussed in the update.

Further Information

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Summary

The University main website and portal are both delivered by a system called Liferay. Since April 2015, there have been a number of outages of Liferay that have meant the website and portal have been unavailable. The frequency of these outages has increased particularly during times of high load including over the start of year.

Investigation and troubleshooting by CIS staff was unable to resolve the issues and as a result we engaged a consultant from Liferay to undertake an assessment and provide recommendations for how to resolve the problems.

The consultant identified a range of issues which can be broadly categorised as follows:

- bespoke developments that had been put in place to support specific UEA requirements
- changes to product features that required recoding
- insufficient awareness within the Web Team of recent Liferay developments
- a need for better control of code
- a need for better control of content creation
- a need for better upgrade processes
- a need for better system configuration

The list of recommendations required a significant amount of effort on the part of both the Web Team and the Digital Innovation Team (estimated to be in excess of 500 days). Given the importance of a stable web presence the decision was taken to seek alternative support and following a brief option appraisal the decision was taken to move Liferay to a hosted solution. A significant proportion of the remedial work that was identified has been included in the migration task.

The switch to the hosted solution is scheduled for 2nd February 2016 following which monitoring and server maintenance will be undertaken by the hosting partner (a company called Firelay). Additionally, we anticipate some improvements in performance and stability albeit there remains further work to be done on coding and configuration post migration. We have commissioned a second company, Worth Systems, who are specialist Liferay consultants, to provide assistance and specialist support for this coding work.

The Digital Innovation Team in ARM are also carrying out some work by manually altering content which has been identified as causing issues.

As noted above, there is an urgent need to address the ongoing training of development staff and specialist training is being arranged.