



Council website usage on the up

Citizens' use of council websites is increasing - albeit at a conservative pace, finds a new survey.

A survey of 1,077 people showed that 73 percent of residents access their local council website to gather information about services or to perform online payment transactions.

The latest poll finds a six percent increase in citizens accessing council services online and a steady increase in citizens making financial transactions online. The same survey 12 months ago found that 67 percent of citizens used council websites, says Webcredible.

This six percent overall increase represents a small but significant change in the way in which people are beginning to engage with their local councils.

Respondents to the survey showed that 27 percent of citizens never used council websites, 34 percent used them occasionally to find information, nine percent used them often but just for information, ten percent used the sites and would consider making a transaction, and 20 percent used the sites for information and transactions.

Richard Beards, web team leader, Northamptonshire County Council, said, "I think the results from the poll are a fair reflection of what is happening in the public sector generally."

Northants has seen an increase of 30,000 unique visitors to its site over the last 12 months.

This is partly due to the public becoming more 'switched on' to the online world but also local councils are becoming more creative in the way that they develop their sites.

Beards continued, "They are adopting a more commercial attitude to online services. Web development and access to online services has

previously been driven by SOCITM and e-government initiatives but now it is by user demand.

"As a result councils are offering greater levels of personalisation and interactivity and are not afraid to let users customise their homepage and mash-up sites. Councils are able to enhance the user experience but still provide high levels of accessibility."