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| **Agenda item:** | **13** |
| **Attachment:** | **E** |

**HRA BOARD COVER SHEET**

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| **Date of Meeting:** | 21 October 2015 |

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| **Title of Paper:** | Website – Review and Way Forward |
| **Purpose of Paper:** | To provide the Board with an update on work to review the direction of travel with the website. |
| **Reason for Submission:** | To provide visibility on the direction of travel and assurance in relation to activity. |
| **Details:** | This report is the output of the website working group which was established to take forward work around the review of the website content in consideration of the business needs of the organisation and following the outcome of the judicial review. The report is an interim report intended to share with the Board the progress and direction of travel for further work. |
| **Time required for item:** | **10 mins** |

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| **Recommendation / Proposed Actions:** | **To Approve** | |  |
| **To Note** | | **x** |
| **For Discussion** | |  |
| **Comments** | Open to views or comments from the Board. | |

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| **Name:** | Katherine Guerin |
| **Job Title:** | Deputy Director of Corporate Services |
| **Date:** | 14/10/15 |

**Background/Context**

The HRA’s website is a key resource for the organisation through which we provide information, guidance, policies, consultations, calls for comment and resources. The website was developed organising information at the top level primarily around audience. It is made up of around 500 pages of content and holds around 900 documents and draws on content is the REC directory database and research summaries database. Each month the website is visited around 30,000 times although some are repeated visits by the same user. Around 150,000 pages are viewed each month, however, some of these are users re-visiting the same page on a number of occasions. On average users spend three minutes on the website each time they visit.

We have a model of delegated authority within the organisation for the review and update of content. However, it has been proving difficult to manage and maintain content. We have been unpicking the challenges created by its current form and considering a way forward in developing the site to better meet the needs of the organisation and site visitors who we believe are predominately from the research community.

As part of this consideration, we are also taking account of the information source that the IRAS application system provides, as each question on the IRAS form has specific guidance and has links both to our website and links to other relevant websites. The popularity of the guidance section on the site points to users accessing content for practical support with research applications.

The outcome of the judicial review has also resulted in the HRA considering its website beyond the immediate remedies on the promoting transparency website pages, required by the judgement.

The website working group was set up as a short term working group to take this forward from the perspective of developing a website that meets our business needs and enables us to take a clear and consistent approach. The group has recommended some short term actions and has shaped thinking for the establishment of a project to take forward the direction of travel for some medium term work.

Separately, there is a piece of work looking at producing a writing guide for the HRA so we can consistently refer to ‘should’ or ‘expect’ noting that in addition we may need to consider ‘must / mandate’ where there is a legal source and a consequence of that legal source of a course of action.

The website group was chaired by Janet Wisely, led by Katherine Guerin, with membership from across the organisation.

In considering the needs of our organisation, colleagues worked within their areas of subject expertise and drew on comparators with other organisations to take a wider view to inform their outputs.

Additional relevant context for the group is the work that the Government Digital Service has been doing across Government to bring all government information and services into one place on GOV.UK. This work has been ongoing over a number of years, although a number of organisations have had an exemption, based on meeting one of the following broad criteria:

* 1. There is public benefit in maintaining a separate organisation site
  2. The website is seen as essential in supporting the organisation in meeting its organisational goals

Under these broad criteria, all NHS organisations were given an exemption and the HRA has been operating on the basis of its exemption on these terms, although with the transfer to NDPB expects that it may need to revisit the website platform options. Hence this working group brought forward a focus on considerations that were already ongoing. As such the considerations included the website as a platform as well as the future possibilities in relation to IRAS.

**Approach**

The website working group was set up with membership from across the key business areas of the organisation, to enable us to draw on the expertise and perspectives of the wide membership. We have had a particular focus on considering our functions and the business requirements as determined by the Care Act in particular in relation to our regulatory functions, and in consideration of scope and application to other key partners and stakeholders.

This report provides a summary view of the output and progress and visibility of both short terms activity and longer term options and direction of travel.

**Immediate/short term actions**

We will undertake some development work with the website supplier investing in a redesign of the home page and revisiting the labelling of our sections as interim work. The aim is to enable us to focus more on the services that we offer and help to signpost users more effectively. In particular, we wish to be able to signpost uses easily to HRA Approval, RECs and CAG.

A redesign of the homepage will also allow us to reflect our recent status as a Non-Departmental Public and to refresh the look and feel of the landing page in line with agreed corporate colours but moving away from the current ‘blocky’ appearance.

The regular reviews of content for clarity, accuracy and consistency in the use of language will be continued.

Spend to undertake this activity will need Cabinet Office Digital Spends Approval via the DH Digital Projects Team as the delegated authority for digital spend has been set at £0.

**Longer term direction of travel**

The website working group have identified the need for a restructure of the existing website material which would allow us to provide more clarity about our work. In particular, we would want to be able to separate out our regulatory functions. The working group has identified the following sections and subsections in relation to our business needs:

1. **Corporate (specific labelling of this section to be agreed)**
   1. Who we are and what we do
   2. News
   3. What we spend and How we spend it
   4. Our priorities (e.g. strategic , corporate and business plans)
   5. How we make decisions
   6. Corporate policies and procedures
   7. Registers and lists
2. **Patients and the Public**
   1. The HRA and Public Involvement in research
   2. How does the HRA involve the public in its work
3. **Regulatory Functions** 
   1. Co-ordination and standardisation of regulatory practice
      1. Promotion of proportionate, standardised regulatory practice across the UK
      2. Mutual co-operation between Devolved Administrations and HRA to co-ordinate and standardise regulatory practice
      3. Mutual co-operation with other regulators
      4. Publication of guidance on
         1. Legal requirements for researchers
         2. Principles of good practice in the management and conduct of research
   2. Regulation of RECs
      1. Guidance about when REC review is required as a matter of
         1. Law
         2. Good practice
      2. Publication requirements of RECS (GAfREC and SOPs)
      3. Monitoring and ensuring RECs’ compliance
      4. Abolition and revocation of RECs
      5. Management of RECs
   3. Regulation and processing of confidential patient information
      1. Decision-making function under Control of Patient Information Regulation
      2. Appointment of a committee to advise
         1. HRA, SofS and HSCIC on the exercise of their functions on those Regulations
         2. HSCIC on the disclosure of identifiable information
4. **Consultations and call for comments**
5. **REC, CAG and HRA Approval (specific labelling of this section to be agreed)**
   1. Service orientated details on each of these in terms of what they offer and how to access them for applicants
6. **Learning and Development Collaboration**
   1. This section would reflect the direction development work taking place in relation to HRA’s delivery of external training for a mixed portfolio of opportunities including face-to- face, online both through the learning management system accessing resources developed in partnership with other organisations, webinars. These opportunities may be made more widely available beyond individual REC or committee members to researchers.

It is proposed that the current content on the website relating to ‘guidance’ will largely be moved to the IRAS domain (or a new separate platform rather than the website) so the research applicants can access it more easily in preparing their applications. The content that is moved here will relate to the UK-wide guidance in recognition that IRAS is provided on behalf of a number of partners and is a UK-wide system.

The technical work to understand how those business needs should be translated into technical requirements has begun but by necessity will need more time to evolve in line with developing our understanding how the business requirements translate into the way that the website will be used both by the business and the visitors to the site to allow us to identify the technology and platform that will be needed to underpin this.

**Conclusions**

The outputs of the working group around our business needs work leads us to a number of options in taking forward the work. The objective for the project group will be to deliver a refreshed website presence that meets our business needs and reflects our statutory duties under the Care Act. In undertaking the project we will consider and assess the viability of a number of options, bearing in mind whichever, option is taken forward any associated spend will require Cabinet Office Digital Spends Approval before we can proceed:

In taking forward the work the project will wish to consider:

1. **Gov.UK**

In recognition of the Government desire to bring all government and information services into the on [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk/) domain we will want to better understand the implications for us. There are a number of areas that the HRA needs to better understand whether we continue to fall within the exemption criteria in particular around:

* 1. how the public, in particular the customers of our website (predominately researchers), would benefit from us remaining separate.
  2. Separation of powers – are there any specific legal duties we have to deliver where our ability to carry them out would be damaged by our presence on [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk/)
  3. How our responsibilities in relation to the Devolved Administrations  could be affected. Where bodies have legal responsibilities to both the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations this needs to be clear to users. Having these organisations only represented on a UK Government website - [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk/) - could be misleading and so they have been given exemption

This could mean that we are able to continue with our own website or in light of supporting UK-wide competitiveness for life-sciences, the approach taken could require us to separate out elements that could sit on the GOV.UK and maintain UK-wide elements on a separate site with links across to GOV.UK.

1. **Technical and procurement approach**

With a better understanding of our business needs (including ongoing oversight and management of the website) we will need to assess whether the current technical platform and existing website provider can meet our needs or whether in restructuring and refreshing the website we will need to undertake a procurement exercise for a new supplier to meet the requirements and future development of the website.

Any investment whether with the current website provider or to allow us to follow a procurement exercise will require Cabinet Office Digital Spend Approval.

1. **Resource Requirements**

A project of this scale is a significant piece of work for the organisation and one of the early priorities of the project group in scoping the work will be to properly understand the resource implications to be able to put this in place to enable successful delivery.

**Establishment of Formal Project**

We propose to take this forward by establishing a formal project led by Katherine Guerin, Deputy Director of Corporate Services, with membership from across the organisation to ensure a collaborative approach is taken drawing on expertise from across the organisation. Janet Wisely, Chief Executive will be the Senior Responsible Owner for the project, maintaining senior oversight and ensuring the project meets its expected objectives.