



# Shared CMS Implementation

## Who was involved?

Chester City Council

Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council

## Project aims

Chester and Crewe decided to pool resources for the selection, implementation and cost of a joint CMS. They also intended to share training costs. They wanted to:

- Improve their websites and increase the use of online services.
- Meet e-government requirements for accessibility.
- Increase the number of approved content editors.
- Implement a 'future proof' CMS system.
- Allow for other sites, not just the main local authority websites, to run off the CMS.
- Improve each authority's intranet
- Use their joint purchasing to make savings.
- Increase skill-sharing and expertise by the two web teams.

## Background

The two authorities wanted to implement a content management system (CMS) for their expanding websites. Both had been approached independently by CMS providers but the systems on offer seemed to be aimed at larger unitary authorities.

The Chester City Council site was slightly more advanced than that of Crewe when the project started. As a result, it was vital to identify a system that would allow Crewe to develop at an acceptable speed, without restricting Chester's progress. In effect, a CMS was needed which, although integrated, would allow each authority to work at its own pace.

## What they did and how they did it

Vendors were checked against a matrix of predefined requirements including functionality and price and five were invited to demonstrate their products before a final selection was made and a CMS, costing around £30,000, was purchased from Immediacy.

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## The results

Acting jointly meant that each authority made savings of more than £19,000 (£38,125 in total). One web server was shared between the two authorities.

This first successful ICT project between the partners has paved the way for other successful initiatives. In addition, the websites of both authorities saw increased traffic and this has continued to grow.

Martin Waters, web manager for Chester City Council, says: "We have been working together for three years now and both councils have just updated and launched new versions of their websites and we are pleased with the results."

## Benefits

Differing areas of expertise in each authority allowed for 'skills gaps' to be filled by the other authority.

Chester was awarded Transactional Status and ranked a top 10 site with a number of examples of best practice in the 2004/5 SOCITM Review while Crewe was given Content+ status.

## Lessons learned

- Establishing a 'partnership group' was vital to ensure that both authorities were equal partners in the project.
- Two authorities working together have a much greater bargaining position when it comes to suppliers and more leverage in terms of negotiating discounts.
- The development/implementation partnership must be maintained throughout the life of the initiative and not fade away once the system is in place.
- The CMS partnership structure must be maintained to facilitate such things as joint upgrades, development of plug-ins and so on.
- Lessons learned by one authority should be shared with the other.

## Contact

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