



OxLEP Corporate Website Project Outline Paper March 2023

Summary and background:

During the past 12 months, the suite of OxLEP websites and our overall digital presence has increased considerably, with the launch of a new OxLEP Business microsite, imminent OxLEP Skills microsite, and development of the Oxford Calling (inward investment) site which has a planned launch sometime in the final quarter of 2023/2024.

To ensure that the corporate website doesn't fall behind and aligns with this new digital presence, we require a new build to be completed before the end of September 2023.

The current site is around five years old and is performing as expected in terms of producing content and sharing information. Its current domain authenticity score is also high and well represented in search engine results due to its age and large number of links across the site.

However, the aesthetics of the site are evidently tired and the large number of pages/bolt-on developments over the years have left the overall experience not necessarily efficient or user-focused.

We feel that now is the best time to refresh and return our users and the user journey to the forefront of the site design.

This site has been built on Drupal. Having moved away from Drupal on our other microsities – we now use Wordpress (OxLEP Business and OxLEP Skills) and ProcessWire (Oxford Calling) – and, matching the skills/experience within our team, we would like to explore using Wordpress again but remain open to the agency's suggestions based on this brief.

This paper aims to outline some of the key issues – and opportunities – that we feel need to be addressed supporting the evolution of OxLEP's refreshed digital platform and presence.

Project headlines:

Budget:	
A total budget of £24,999 (excluding VAT) is provisionally available for this project.	
Purpose:	
The purpose of our digital presence is to ‘engage, direct, and inspire’	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage – engage new and returning customers and help them to understand who OxLEP are and what we do.• Direct – create a customer journey that is effective in triaging visitors to the right microsite or correct information that resides within the corporate site.• Inspire – inspire our key audiences through an exciting range of content and media, such as podcasts, case studies, articles and testimonials.	
Website builder:	
The current platform/CMS in-place for the main OxLEP website (Drupal platform) creates limited functionality for the in-house team and changes/developments that go beyond the routine are not able to be completed without the skills of a digital agency.	
Whilst for larger development projects we will always look to the agency, ideally, we would like a more flexible, user-friendly platform builder at our disposal for everyday tasks.	
Customer experience/journey:	
What OxLEP is and what we do can be complex to new customers and those unfamiliar with LEPs, local authorities and this area of the public sector world.	
We want to help our audience to access the right information they require to meet their needs efficiently – therefore we need to ensure that the website creates an immediate and strong customer experience, is very accessible and clear, and sets the tone for a really positive first and/or continued engagement with OxLEP.	
Content-focused:	
OxLEP has a very broad audience and so our content must land with multiple stakeholders.	
The site should support our ability to create, publish and share engaging content easily – but we’re also open to the idea of going beyond standard templates and to produce something unique.	
An intuitive search functionality:	
Due to the nature of OxLEP’s work, alongside creative content, we also produce a vast amount of informational content and documents; we feel we need an intuitive process/experience that allows this formal content to be categorised and found easily by users.	

Further project details:

Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a total provisional budget of £24,999 for this project (excluding VAT).
Website builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given the fairly limited functionality with the website’s

	<p>current builder, there are a number of changes we would like to explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The ability to embed assets and use shortcode/iframes etc without the required intervention of a digital agency. ➤ More flexibility in page structure creation, being able to call in a wide range of modules. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate analytics tracking that is pre-built within the website. • Incorporate SEO and KPI analytics measurements into the content management system, creating a better performance analysis of pages.
Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We see a great need to signpost new visitors to our relevant sub brands/microsites, with the goal of increasing familiarity of our full offer; over time, users would transition from needing to go through via the main corporate site to reach the microsites, effectively moving from new leads to return customers. • This platform will (in most cases) be the start of the user journey, and the move from one site to another needs to be seamless and consistent. • Having a first-in-class homepage, menu experience and site infrastructure will be crucial to the success of 'triaging' visitors through the corporate site to their next step. • Overall, a balance needs to be struck between needing to move visitors on to the right microsite and attempting to engage them with our narratives/content – we should be aiming to pique interest in the OxLEP brand and activities, whilst also funnelling visitors into clear and obvious journeys through to our microsites.
Engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be required to share narratives of OxLEP's positive impact in Oxfordshire; past, present and future. We want to present these narratives in visually engaging formats (blog posts, thought pieces, photo galleries, videos, events, interviews, podcasts, case studies), in order to keep visitors engaged and interacting with our site. • In keeping with our refreshed/new microsites and

	<p>Oxford Calling, the new website should provide us with the ability to create forms, embed media, and generally allow for customisation to a high level (appreciating the need for agency experience in technical undertakings), to reduce the reliance on agency involvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of design, we have undertaken a recent company-wide ‘rebranding’ exercise (in terms of colour palettes and supporting assets), and we need to ensure that these are incorporated into the new website.
<p>Inform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a FAQ/query section with intuitive search capabilities for users and overall improved site accessibility. Initial thoughts include predictive/autofill search, user-friendly search result exploration and, to the more ambitious/extreme end, an AI/chat function that narrows down search results or delivers the correct content. We ultimately want to avoid this part of the site having the traditional ‘CMS’ feel of an FAQ section that can often be limited in user interaction capabilities. Our current corporate site only offers a ‘precise’ search term result, which we feel doesn’t create a strong user experience. • Installing a feedback system that allows users to indicate that they found, or failed to find, what they are looking for, or even the ability to rate the quality of the results, could enable us to gauge how well the system is working, discover pain points and collect other critical UX data. • We envisage there being a specific need for uploading and managing a lot of documents (primarily PDFs) and these needing to be easily found (tied into above points). It may be that the CMS that comes with the site builder doesn’t provide enough capabilities and that we’d need additional plugin/software to upgrade this experience.

Goals:

The targets we set for the 12-month period following the site launch will be further clarified once we have engaged with the chosen agency.

Acknowledging that there will be a natural adjustment period for return visitors visiting the new website, some general targets could include (measuring at 3, 6 and 12 months):

- **Improving customer retainment on content pages**
- **Increasing referral traffic to microsites**
- **Achieving high success rate on user searches within site**
- **Achieve more conversions through our sign-up forms**

KPIs:

In addition, listed below are a number of KPIs that we intend to associate with the ongoing performance of the website once built:

- Unique visits (an indicator of lead generation, digital advertising, SEO activities)
- Dwell time (specifically on content-related pages)
- Viewing and engagement metrics on content (clicks, listens, video views etc)
- Referral traffic on microsites from OxLEP corporate site
- “Events”, e.g. form completions, button clicks
- FAQ success – i.e. feedback rating/score

Process and next steps:

To be considered for this project, please respond to this outline paper no later than **12 noon on 11 April 2023**. This opportunity was first published on the OxLEP website (news section) on 21 March 2023 at 12noon.

Within your response, we would expect to see:

- Creative ideas as how you would address some of the opportunities and challenges outlined in this paper.
- Experience of similar projects and how your work was implemented there.
- An expected timeline for delivery and the dependencies on our in-house team to support this process.
- An overview of costings for this project and stages of payment where required.
- Please ensure that responses are kept to a maximum of 20 pages, per submission.

We will contact all agencies by **12noon on 17 April 2023** informing you of next steps – this could include an interview and further presentation of your ideas where necessary.

We will be aiming to hold our first project meeting shortly following this decision with the view of the chosen agency beginning work on the project immediately after this.

We would like to have completed all elements of this project by the end of September 2023, though a mutually-agreed timetable will be put in-place prior to the commencement of the project.

Please submit your responses to both Jordan Whitefoot (Digital Strategy Lead) and Rob Panting (Communications Manager) at OxLEP via the below email addresses:

Jordan Whitefoot: jordan.whitefoot@oxfordshirelep.com

Rob Panting: robert.panting@oxfordshirelep.com

If you have any queries on the project, please do also contact Jordan or Rob who are both happy to hold informal discussions regarding the project.

ENDS:

JW and RP – 7.3.2023