Report to:	QSMTM
Report by:	Claire Stephen, Head of Policy and Information (HOPI)
Meeting Date:	31 May 2024
Subject/ Title: (and VC no)	Website Statistics Report Q4 2023-24 committee report VC209093
Attached Papers (title and VC no)	Website Statistics Report Q4 2023-24 VC209093

Purpose of report

1. To report on performance of the Scottish Information Commissioner's website in Q4 of 2023-24 and a summary of performance for the year 2023-2024.

Recommendation and actions

2. I recommend that:

3. The Senior Management Team (SMT) notes the contents of this report

   (i) This committee report and attached report is published in full as set out in the publication section below.

   (ii) That SMT agree that future reporting on website performance is integrated into our Communications Strategy report.

Executive summary

4. The attached document reports on activity on the Commissioner's website during Q4 2023-24 and provides a summary of the performance of the website over 2023-24.

5. Performance figures remain healthy and as expected. This is the first full year of website performance statistics that have not been influenced by the launch of our new website. The new website is performing well with Users, Page Views and Session increasing throughout the year.

6. The most viewed pages of the website during Q4 2023-24 included the Homepage, 'Briefings and Guidance' pages, and the decisions database. The most accessed pages throughout 2023-24, remained consistent with our Homepage, 'Briefings and Guidance', 'Appeal' and the decisions database consistently appearing in the top 5.

7. Notable that we've experienced zero downtime with our website over the last year.

Risk impact

8. The website is the Commissioner's principal communication tool. The risks associated with lack of effective communications are identified within existing risk management mechanisms, and are mitigated by actions set out in our communications planning and strategy tools.

Equalities impact

9. In 2023-24, we undertook a website audit to assess the accessibility of our website, in line with requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2)

Accessibility Regulations 2018. Recommendations from this audit were implemented and our accessibility statement updated.

10. We continue to work on improving the accessibility of the content of our website.

11. It is noted that not all people in Scotland can or wish to use the internet, and as a result the Commissioner provides information in alternative formats including via the enquiries service, wherever possible.

Privacy impact

12. No new privacy implications arise from this report.

Resources impact

13. The website is currently maintained within planned operational resources, and the content of this report does not in itself give rise to any additional resource impact.

Operational/ strategic plan impact

14. The performance of the Commissioner's website is critical to delivery of several strategic and operational priorities. This report's findings do not highlight any new impacts.

Records management impact (including any key documents actions)

15. None identified.

Consultation and Communication

16. Relevant policy and information officers have been involved in preparation of the report. This report provides detail to the SMT about performance of the Commissioner's website.

Publication

17. I recommend that this committee report and the attached paper are published in full

Website Statistics Report Q4 2023-24

Background and introduction

1. This report provides data from the Scottish Information Commissioner's website (**www.itspublicknowledge.info**), although the report focusses on for the period from 1 January to 31 March 2024 (Q4 2023-24), it also reflects on the annual overall performance of the website

2. As previously noted, Google Analytics data from the previous website appeared unreliable and inconsistent. The new website was launched on 7 April 2022 with GA4 adopted in July 2023.

3. Over the last year, we experienced no service disruption with regard to the availability of our website and minimal technical issues.

Key website metrics: Annual summary 2023-2024

2023-24 Website performance stats	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Users	10,233	11,462	11,896	13,398	46,989
New Users	7,915	9,150	10,501	11,830	39,396
Sessions	17,747	19,717	24,298	29,718	91,480
Return visitors (%)	31.2	28.9	17.8	21.7	24.9 (avg)
Pageviews	48,793	53,519	58,133	71,284	231,729
Unique page views	40,044	44,097	Not on GA4	Not on GA4	N/A
Bounce rate (%)	53.42	54.46	38.9	38.2	46.2 (avg)
Acquisition Search engine (%)	63	60	45	62	58 (avg)
Direct (%)	27	26	26	27	27 (avg)
Referral (%)	9	10	6	6	8 (avg)
Social (%)	1	5	23	5	9 (avg)

4. New user numbers have increased steadily from Q1. A new user is someone who has visited our website for the first time. However, its important to note that this is based on browser cookies, people who have cleared their cookies or accessed the website using a different device will be counted as a new user.

5. Sessions also show a trend upwards over the year. A session is a single visit to our website, consisting of one or more pageviews. However, a session timeout is 30 minutes – if the user is on longer than 30 mins, it will be counted as two sessions.

6. Unique page views extracts pages that are viewed multiple times in single session. GA4 does not automatically record this – consequently, we do not have data on this metric from July 2023.

7. Bounce rate has reduced over the year to 38.2%, with an average of 46.2 % over the year. Bounce rate is the percentage of sessions with a single page view. If our aim is to direct people to other pages on our website, then we should aim to lower the bounce rate. However, its important to apply context when looking at bounce rate as we may wish some pages to deliver all of the information that somebody is looking for. We've previously referred to industry standards of 55% or lower representing adequate performance, this standard is clearly more relevant in the context of commercial sites. Q4 recorded a 38.2% bounce rate, which indicates good engagement with our website, but further consideration of the purpose of our website content is required with setting bounce rate goals.

8. Acquisition figures tell us how people are finding our website. Our figures indicate that, increasingly people are using search engines to locate our site. In Q4, with 62% of activity on our website was as a result of search engine search.

9. Direct refers to typing the URL directly (may be saved as a favourite) or clicking on a link in an email application. Direct sessions also includes other cases where Google Analytics is unable to identify the source of the click. This figure has remained relatively consistent throughout the year.

10. Referral is where a user is directed to our website from a third-party website. There has a been a dip in the % of users coming to us through referral. The most common referrals can be attributed to the Scottish Government's intranet site, followed by WhatDoTheyKnow.com.

11. Users accessing our site via social media remains low but steady. As an organisation we are limited to the use of Twitter, it is likely that acquisitions from this medium will increase.

Most accessed content

12. Top 10 pages in Q4:

No.	Page	Q4 Sessions
1	Home	4,741
2	/foisa-exemptions	2,179
3	/briefings and guidance	1,039
4	/foi-law	889
5	/decisions	684
6	/appeal	490
7	/eir-exceptions	476
8	/publication schemes	434
9	/response calculator	414
10	/who can I ask	383