

Proposal for Community Engagement Tool

Town Council Report 18.11.20 – Item 12

Background:

One of the key objectives for PTC is to consult as widely as possible to ensure that quality decisions are made on behalf of Portishead.

The need for wide consultation is particularly important for the Portishead Neighbourhood plan. Without documented evidence of wide consultation and public opinion to back up the proposals and policies documented in the Plan, it will most likely be rejected by the Planning Inspector as well as the general public.

There are of course many other reasons why PTC will want to consult widely with the people of Portishead.

With the restrictions of the covid pandemic, face to face, consultation is challenging, so on-line tooling becomes even more important, although it should never be used as the only means of consultation, otherwise certain parts of the population will be unfairly discriminated against.

Given the pressing need for the ability to consult as widely as possible for multiple reasons, PTC has investigated on-line community engagement tools.

Evaluation Process

Three on-line engagement tools were evaluated by the evaluation team comprising Molly Cheek, Paddy Sterndale and Paul Gardner. Evaluation included a demonstration of the different toolsets, and desktop research of the case studies and consultation link provided by the vendor.

1. Social Integrated Agency. Based in Bristol

<https://www.social.co.uk/>

The Agency has a unit called “Social Place” which is its “dedicated communications consultancy for the built environment”. The Social Place mission is “To help our clients shape places whilst improving people’s lives.”

It provides the online mapping tool being used by Aberdeen Standard Investments to support consultation around the Wyndham Way study area.

The tool gives the respondent the opportunity to drop a pin on a particular point on the map and add their thoughts. Others can Like, Dislike or feedback on the originators comment. Management information is provided on the number and type of comments, but free text analysis needs to be done manually. The consultation area map can be configured to include an area of your choice.

If we wanted to undertake a follow on detailed “drill down” consultation of a specific area identified in an initial overall consultation , this is not currently supported out of the box, but could be provided with some IT development work.

Socials’ services and tooling are aimed at general community engagement, urban regeneration and development. The company specialises in adding value to the tooling by promoting it through social media, local media engagement and community outreach.

COMMERCIALS

Social’s estimated pricing for the platform with the interactive mapping tool is between £8k and 10k per annum.

This approximate cost would be for the whole platform with the map including the website and URL hosting, set up and a reasonable level of ongoing maintenance.

This pricing assumes that PTC will be content with a minimal level of review from Social to ensure it works in the context of the site.

Social has suggested two or three days per month support would be needed . Their day rate is £850 per day.

2. CommonPlace. Based in London with an Office in Bristol.

<https://www.commonplace.is/>

The Company focus on Planning Consultations, Community engagement and Transport Planning . It aims its platform as a complement to “outreach”, face to face communications and tries to make its platform as easy to use for people as possible and reach people who would otherwise not be engaged.

The tooling has 3 main modules:

1) Community Map which gives the respondent the opportunity to drop a pin on a particular point on the map and add their thoughts. Other can Like, Dislike or feedback on the originators comment. The consultation area map can be configured to include an area of your choice.

2) Design Tiles which enable you to take specific sub-areas and drill down on them to request more detailed community feedback on specific design or development options. For example, a tile could be created for a sub-area to specifically ask for feedback on environmental options or transport options.

3) A reporting module provides data and analysis on the number and type of comments. Free text analysis can be automatically generated.

The 3 modules are designed to follow and link the planning process from high level consultation through to detailed option analysis.

CommonPlace has example question banks derived from many Neighbourhood Plan and other relevant consultations that they have supported.

There are 750 “commonplace” sites in production. Locally, the toolset is used in places such as Bristol, BANES and Frome. It has a lot of local council clients and has supported 30+ Neighbourhood Plans

Some relevant Commonplaces and case studies are shown below

EXAMPLE PROJECT LINKS

- [Catford Town Regeneration](#) (Heatmap)
- [Catford Framework](#) (Design Feedback)
- [Ramsgate Neighbourhood Plan](#) (Heatmap)
- [Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan](#) (Heatmap)
- [Walk / Ride / Frome](#) (Active Travel Heatmap)
- [Greenwich Liveable Neighbourhoods](#) (Design Feedback)
- [Greenwich Town Centre](#) (Heatmap)
- [Enfield Local Plan](#) (Local Plan Design Feedback)

CASE STUDIES

- [Catford Town Centre Framework](#)
- [Blackpool Towns Fund: Engaging with the community during lockdown](#)
- [Creating Mini Holland in Waltham Forest](#)
- [Active Travel and Bugbears in Bristol](#)

COMMERCIALS

Town Council single project-based pricing options for the engagement and consultation modules.

Each licence includes hosting, training and all the support required from our in-house [Customer Success team](#) to ensure your project is set up successfully, deployed and monitored.

Town Council Project Module Pricing (per project annual licence)

- [Community Heatmap](#) (CH): **£3,000**
- [Design Feedback](#) (DF): **£5,000**
- CH+DF Bundle: **£6,000**

Unlimited Licences

Commonplace also provide an unlimited licence option for licences which could be used for any engagements across the Town Council

For the size and scope of Portishead Town Council, these would be priced at:

- Departmental/Programme licence: **£15,000 1-year licence**
- Corporate/Unlimited licence: **£17,000 1-year licence**

****All prices are subject to VAT***

Having discussed with Commonplace, our assessment is that the “CH&DF” Bundle will meet current requirements of PTC for Neighbourhood Planning and Community consultation.

The tools are very easy to use and configure so it is unlikely that PTC would need additional support over and above the support that comes with the licences.

3. Citizenspace Social Integrated Agency. Based in London with an Office in Bristol.

https://www.delib.net/citizen_space

Citizenspace is part of another Company called Delib with offices in Bristol, Canberra and Christchurch (New Zealand)

The Company focus is on larger organisations including district, unitary authority and national government departments. The look and feel and usability of the tools reflected this, they were less intuitive than the competitors and more geared to the statutory processes required by large public sector organisations. The various consultation examples were quite text heavy and reliant on excel downloads for data analysis and there was no automated analysis of free text. The Hamilton (New Zealand) example was more engaging, but it appeared that a lot of design and configuration effort would be needed to get the tools configured in order to make the engagement experience as simple as possible for residents. There were limited example provided of the map functionality that comprise the core of the competitor products.

We would need to set up and configure our own Citizenspace landing page for our Neighbourhood plan.

Citizenspace has a separate “Dialogue module” that could be used to support detailed drill down consultations on specific areas and topics.

Citizenspace provided the following examples and case studies:

- [The Citizen Space Aggregator](#),
- [Sefton's homepage](#),
- [Linear survey with drop downs from Hamilton](#),
- [Chapter based PKC consultation with video embedded](#)
- [Another chapter based consultation from Brighton - planning](#)
- [Sutton's routed survey](#)
- [Routed planning menu \(2 pages in\)](#)
- [Full feedback page from the Isle of Man](#)
- [Local Plan responses from Eastleigh](#)
- Example of online drop in sessions and [Citizen Space from Hackney](#)

Dialogue examples (Dialogue is £4,995 a year):

- [George's Ideas Lab from Bristol CC](#)
- [Torfean's Litter Challenge](#)
- [Scottish Government's Covid conversation](#)

COMMERCIALS:

Citizen Space [is linked here on to Government Digital Marketplace](#). The lowest annual subscription is £7,995, the service for each band is the same and includes:

- Unlimited internal admin users, Unlimited activity and responses (private and public)
- A dedicated Account Manager, Full support, 24 hour disaster recovery, All updates
- A say in product development, - Free mini top up training
- UK hosting, Access to user groups and webinars

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The most urgent community engagement requirement is to support Neighbourhood Planning.
- The Commonplace toolset supports the end to end Neighbourhood Planning process. It has an established track record and many good examples where the tool has been used successfully to support wide consultation.
- The Commonplace and Social products are about the same from an ease of use perspective.
- The common place track records means that we can re-use good practice from other Commonplace sites.
- CommonPlace is the least expensive.
- Our assessment is that all three products would provide benefits for PTC.

We recommend the purchase of CommonPlace.