



Improvement

Customer led transformation programme

Case study – Cambridgeshire

Social media project in Fenland

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The Customer Led Transformation programme

Cambridgeshire and Fenland's work has been funded under the Customer Led Transformation programme. The fund aims to embed, at a strategic level, the use of customer insight and social media tools and techniques across the public sector to support place-based working.

The programme is overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by LG Improvement and Development).

The fund was established specifically to support collaborative working between councils and their partners, focussing on using customer insight and social media to improve service outcomes. These approaches should improve customer engagement by gathering insight into preferences and needs, the evidence and intelligence needed to redesign services to be more targeted, effective and efficient.

About Fenland in Cambridgeshire

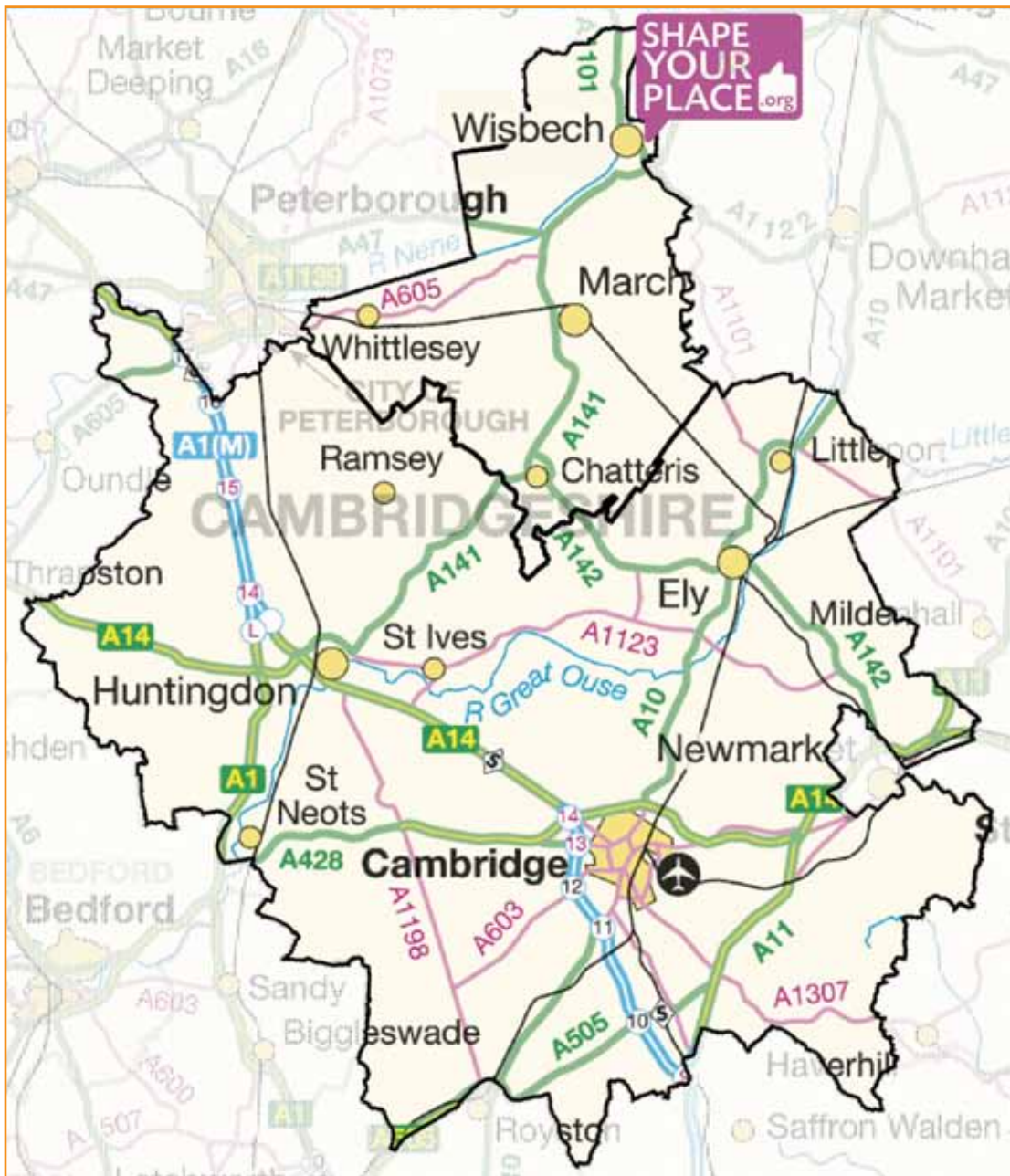
As the map over illustrates, Fenland is situated in north east Cambridgeshire and comprises 546 square kilometres. Fenland is one of five districts within the county of Cambridgeshire. There are four principal market towns in Fenland in which 76 per cent of the population live; Wisbech, March, Whittlesey and Chatteris and 16 parishes covering 21 villages. The initial implementation of the ShapeYourPlace.org website reported in this case study focuses on the town of Wisbech and the surrounding villages located in Fenland District's north east.

Fenland is the most deprived district in Cambridgeshire. Furthermore, the most deprived areas of Fenland are in Wisbech and its surrounding rural area. Traditionally employment has been agriculture related. It has faced a period of long term structural decline which has also been reflected in the related food processing industries and services. The area contains a large Traveller community which experiences the worst economic and social deprivation of all communities in Cambridgeshire.

Fenland residents are among the least satisfied with their area as a place to live in Cambridgeshire.¹

¹ Fenland: Annual demographic and socio-economic information report. March 2010. Research Group, Cambridgeshire County Council.

Map of Cambridgeshire



Contains Ordnance Survey data
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About the project

The project has created 'ShapeYourPlace.org' – a community website for Fenland which aims to enable local residents to feedback on service provision and highlight issues in their neighbourhood. The website aims to encourage local communities to get more involved in influencing local services and decisions. It promotes opportunities to get involved in community events, schemes (eg neighbourhood watch, community speedwatch) and attend public meetings. ShapeYourPlace.org also provides content from other organisations which is useful and relevant to communities in the local area. Once the concept of ShapeYourPlace.org has been tested and proven in Wisbech, the partners plan to create replicate versions of the site for the other towns in Fenland – March, Whittlesey and Chatteris.

Background

Cambridgeshire County Council began developing their Community Engagement Strategy in 2009, and was keen to use new technologies and social media as part of their strategy to engage hard to reach groups.

The funded project is focused on serving the residents of Fenland – the 13th most deprived area in England according to the Place Survey². Only 23 per cent of residents feel they can influence local decisions, compared to 30 per cent for the national average. Voter turnout is also lower than the national average, as is “the percentage of people from different backgrounds that get on well together”.

² <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/audit/nis/Pages/placesurvey.aspx>

Fenland contains a large migrant population from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia and Portugal. It also has a relatively large Traveller population. As well as these migrant populations, the social media project is also seeking to reach a number of hard to engage groups including youth, older people, disabled people, and time pressured 25 – 40 year olds.

With funding from the Customer Led Transformation programme, the project has been able to take the time to work closely with residents, as well as partners, to design, develop and promote a social media site customised to meet the needs and priorities of the local area.

The Challenge in Wisbech

- poor place survey results – NI1, NI4, NI17
- high unemployment, economic deprivation
- large migrant community – Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian
- low educational attainment and IT skills
- slow broadband access, lack of computer ownership.

Objective

The objective is to use social media to help build stronger communities and improve cohesion by engaging the local community and improving their ability to communicate about the issues that affect them. The site is designed to offer residents a means of raising issues with public services by posting

their view, comment and questions on the site. The site will help to identify and map areas where issues are prevalent, and help agencies focus service delivery and set priority outcomes.

The Safer Fenland Partnership, comprising the Police, fire service, the county and district councils and the local housing association, identified a number of issues and priorities that local people wanted them to address. These included anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, vandalism, theft and robbery.

The Safer Fenland Partnership has a number of face-to-face engagement activities – including Neighbourhood Panels and ‘Community Fairs’. These are one day events run by Fenland District Council in different localities across Fenland that invite residents to meet a range of different agencies as well as community and voluntary groups. The ShapeYourPlace.org site set out to complement and support these activities.

The project also intended to stimulate greater adoption of social media by local residents, such as the creation of their own social media groups. The diagram below illustrates the project’s vision for how social media can support community engagement.

Approach

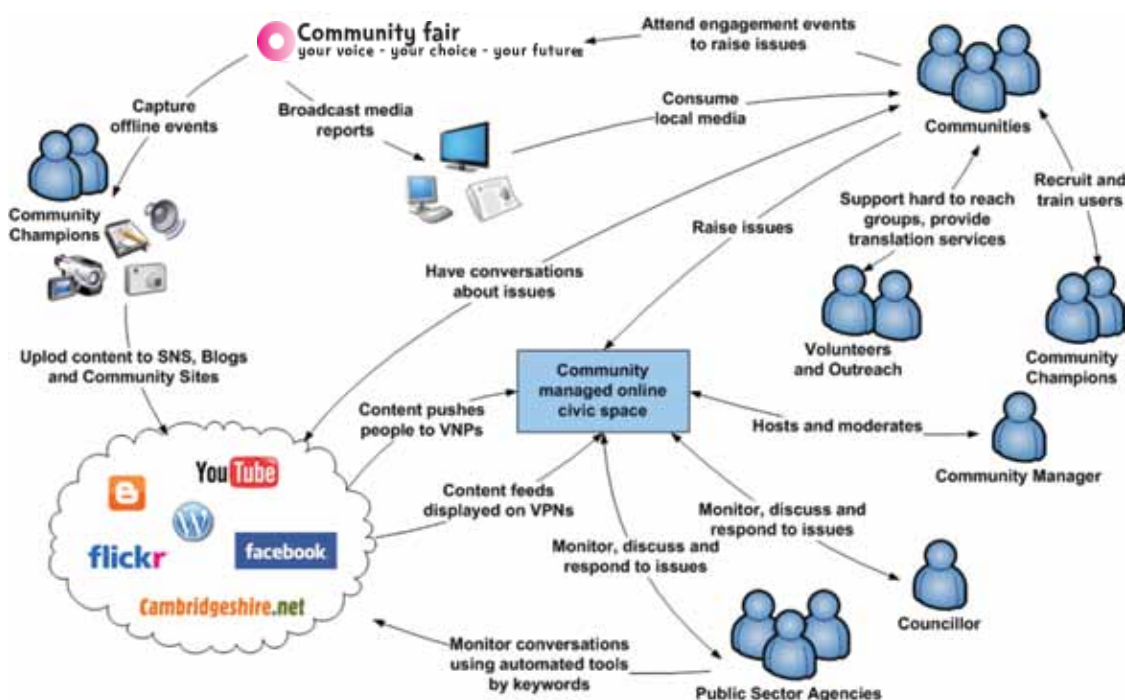
The project took a methodological, step-by-step approach to designing, developing and testing ShapeYourPlace.org.

Mapping of community engagement and groups

At the start of the project it was important to identify existing engagement activities and community networks that could help determine requirements and help deliver the project. The project team mapped out contacts, groups and activities using a free, collaborative online mind-mapping tool called Mindmeister.³

³ <http://www.mindmeister.com>

Figure 1. Using online and off-line media to engage local residents in dialogue



Local social media audit

To understand the local communities' residents' current use of social media, the project team first audited the social media that already existed. The team searched for Facebook groups, blogs, community sites, and discussion forums relating to the area. The project identified some community sites for parishes, but with little discussion or activity.

Community consultation

The project undertook a community consultation, with outreach workers surveying 250 members of the public to understand their current behaviour, relationship with public authorities, and use of social media. The survey asked:

- What do you do if you have a problem?
- Who do you contact? Who do you report the problem to?
- What technology do you use?
- What, if any, social networking sites do you use?

- Do you know the name of your councillor?

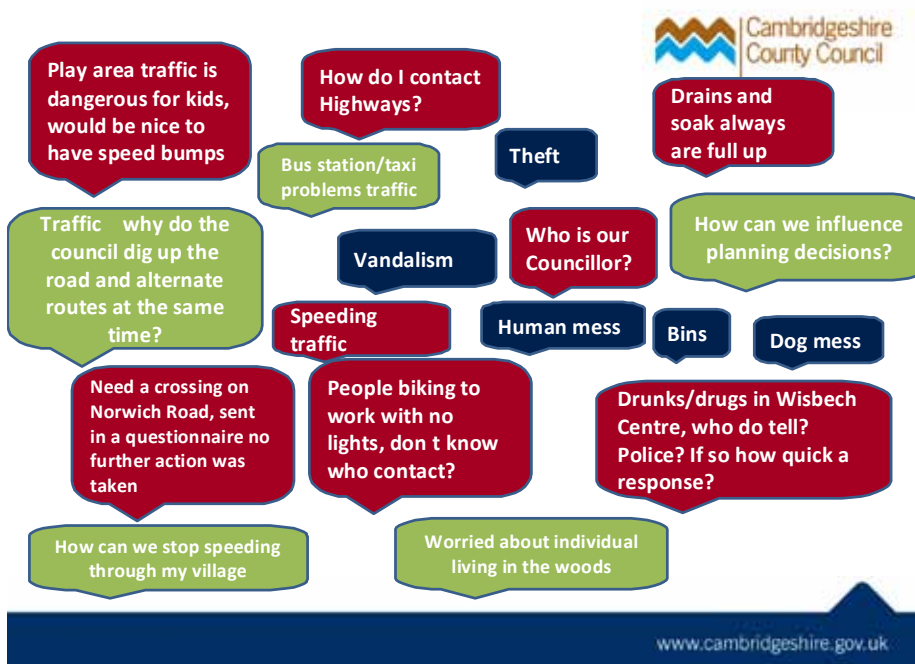
Focus groups

The project conducted eight focus groups with the hard to reach groups (previously listed) to gather feedback on the current and potential use of social media. The facilitators also presented participants with a range of social media sites including:

- Google Maps
- YouTube
- FixMyStreet
- Facebook
- Flickr
- My Society.
- Twitter
- Haringey Online

The participants were encouraged to sample each site for ten minutes, and then sort and arrange screen shots of each site to describe what they liked or disliked about each one. The participants were then asked whether they were likely to use sites like these to discuss local issues or report problems to the authorities. The focus groups were facilitated by existing community outreach workers.

Figure 2. What problems do residents wish to report?



Source: Fenland social media project

These consultation exercises helped the project to understand what types of issues residents were likely to report to the authorities, how they were likely to report them, and their propensity to use social media.

The project used the feedback generated by the community consultation and the focus groups to present the findings and emerging requirements to the Project Board.

Stakeholder workshop

The project then convened a workshop with the stakeholders. At the workshop, the stakeholders were introduced to a range of scenarios and user stories based on the feedback from the community consultation and focus groups.



Example scenario: Park Safety

Scenario

- Families are afraid of going to play areas in the park because of drinking and drug-taking.
- CCTV cameras have been put up, but this has just moved the problem to another area of the park.
- Would like more patrols or something to be done to make it safe, even during the day.

Roles

- Stacy: mum who lives near the park.
- John: partnership member who receives the query via the site.
- Mary: councillor/contractor who has to respond to the problem and do something about it.

The scenarios outlined the nature of the issues that users indicated they were likely to report, how and to whom they might report issues, and what their interests are to that particular situation (an example scenario is given in the text box above). The participants were also given cards representing components of the social media functionality that had been discussed with residents at the focus groups. These included blogs, events, calendar, video clips, etc.

The project team divided the stakeholders into two groups, and the stakeholders were asked to role-play residents (based on the above user scenarios) and build a solution that met the requirement of the situation using the website components on the cards. The groups tested their websites using scenarios and role play. Each group then

offered feedback on why they had chosen particular components and how the sites would work.

The workshop helped the stakeholders to understand how the site might work, and helped the project team to prioritise and finalise a list of requirements for the site.

Generating requirements

The community consultation, focus groups and stakeholder workshop highlighted the following requirements for the site from residents, agencies, councillors and specific groups.

Residents' requirements:

- residents want to raise issues and concerns
- residents want to know who can help them resolve local issues
- residents want to be updated about what agencies are doing to address issues raised
- residents want to have a say on what agencies are doing to address issues raised
- residents want to suggest ideas to improve the local area, or highlight positive things happening in the local area
- residents want to know what's going on locally
- partners want to improve relations among local communities
- community groups want to gather support for new projects.

Agency (ie public sector partner) requirements:

- agencies want to be able to find out what community priorities between offline events
- agencies want to encourage local people to be more involved in local decision making
- agencies need an easy way to track activity on the site and locally

- agencies need a way to promote the site effectively.

Specific group requirements:

- migrant communities who do not speak English want to be involved in local conversations and decisions
- young people want to have their voices heard about issues that are affecting them
- people with disabilities want to be able to access the site
- the site must be easy to use for everyone.

Councillor requirements:

- councillors need a regular digest of what's going on locally, what issues are being discussed, etc.

Usability testing

Based on these requirements, the project team developed a site and conducted usability testing with the original participants' focus groups. Participants were encouraged to try the site, and offer their feedback. Conducting usability testing with those that contributed to focus groups also emphasised to these members of the community that the partners were acting on the input that they had given.

One of the improvements to the site made following the usability testing was to make the comments boxes more prominent. Participants emphasised that they would come back to the site to see if someone had responded to an issue and would be more likely to participate if responses have been provided.

The Shape Your Place website

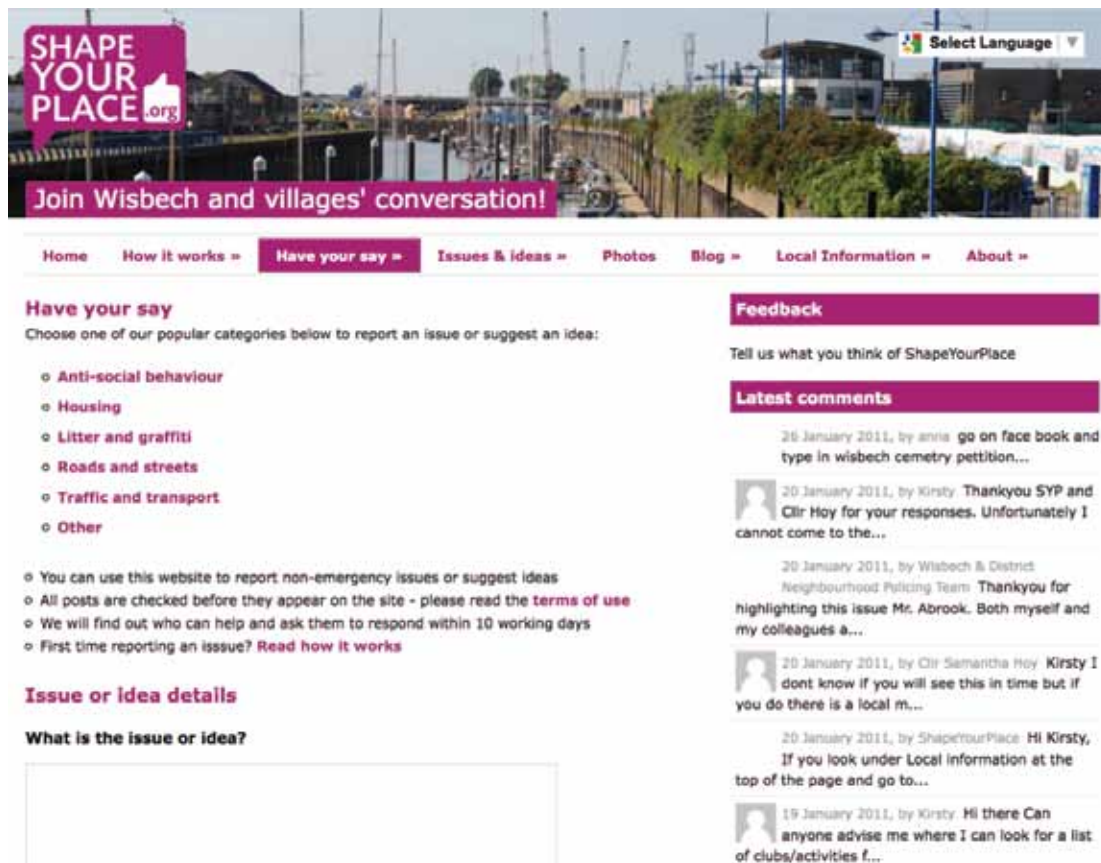


How it works

As the screenshot above illustrates, the first implementation of the ShapeYourPlace.org website serves the residents of Wisbech, one the market towns in Fenland District. Residents of Wisbech and the surrounding villages can:

1. find out what's going on in their neighbourhood –
 - view the latest issues and ideas, posted by neighbours
 - rate issues and ideas with a 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down'
 - subscribe to an issue or idea to receive email alerts when updates are posted
 - add their views or offer advice, by commenting on issues and ideas.
2. report community issues or suggest ideas to improve their neighbourhood –
 - use an online form to report an issue or suggest an idea.
3. receive responses and solutions from service providers and neighbours –
 - local councils, the Police and fire and rescue service respond within ten days
 - neighbours can offer support or advice, by commenting and rating issues and ideas
 - popular issues or ideas are referred to neighbourhood forums or police surgeries and can influence local services and priorities.

Figure 3. “Have Your Say” on ShapeYourPlace.org



Moderation

Anything posted on the site first goes to a team of moderators before appearing on the website. The partners involved in the project decided not to do the moderation themselves, instead contracting out the moderation to a community organisation – the Rosmini Centre. An administrator at the centre coordinates the work of a pool of volunteers who moderate postings. Furthermore, posts written in Polish or Lithuanian or one of the other languages used by the migrant population will be translated by the Rosmini Centre before being passed onto the relevant service area.

Moderators do not change the text of a posting (ie they do not correct spelling errors). The project conducted considerable research into moderation best practice and discovered that were they to change the content of a posting they then become legally responsible for that content. Hence, the

moderators’ role is to ensure the postings are appropriate for the site, and that the appropriate partners are made aware of postings relevant to them.

Referral system

The moderators use an existing A–Z of the services provided by the partnership to ensure the issues that residents raised on the site are directed to the appropriate people. The project also undertook some process mapping to identify how issues posted on the site would feed into their existing processes, and concluded that it was impossible to treat an issue raised through social media any differently than something communicated through another channel. Hence, the ShapeYourPlace.org site sets the expectation from the outset with their visitors that the service providers will endeavour to respond within ten working days – which is the same timescale as for contact by telephone, email and letter.

Outputs

A range of outputs are available from the Fenland Social Media project Community of practice <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do> The following outputs are based on industry best practice, and have been checked by Cambridgeshire County Council's legal department:

- website terms of use
- privacy policy
- moderation guidance and checklist
- service level agreements with the moderation agency
- service level agreements with partners to ensure they understood their commitments.

Benefits/results

The ShapeYourPlace.org website for Wisbech and the surrounding villages went live at the beginning of October 2010. Hence, it is too early to evaluate the benefits to local residents. However to date (5 January 2011) the site has attracted:

- 2,050 unique visitors who have made
- 5,201 site visits and viewed
- 22,639 pages.

The site includes functionality enabling users to rate the site and provide feedback.

Since the site went live it has:

- published 45 blogs
- dealt with 34 issues; all responded to, two recently posted as outstanding
- received 137 comments
- received 51 ratings.

Although the website is still in its early days users have provided some positive comments:

“I used the site to report a street lamp that wasn't working and it was fixed.”

Anne W., resident, verbal feedback

“I reported the zebra crossing was disappearing. It was repainted. Result!”

Annie A., resident, Twitter

“Many thanks again for your very clear reply.”

Owen S., resident, on site in response to an issue he had raised

“Shape Your Place website is starting to take shape – hope it continues to develop @shapeyourplace”

Rob M., Twitter

“Thanks for those responses. I have noticed that the site seems much more secure lately and wish the project good luck for the future.”

John S., resident, on site in response to a anti-social behaviour issue at a Wisbech playground

The site can point to a number of successes even though it has only been running a short time, including:

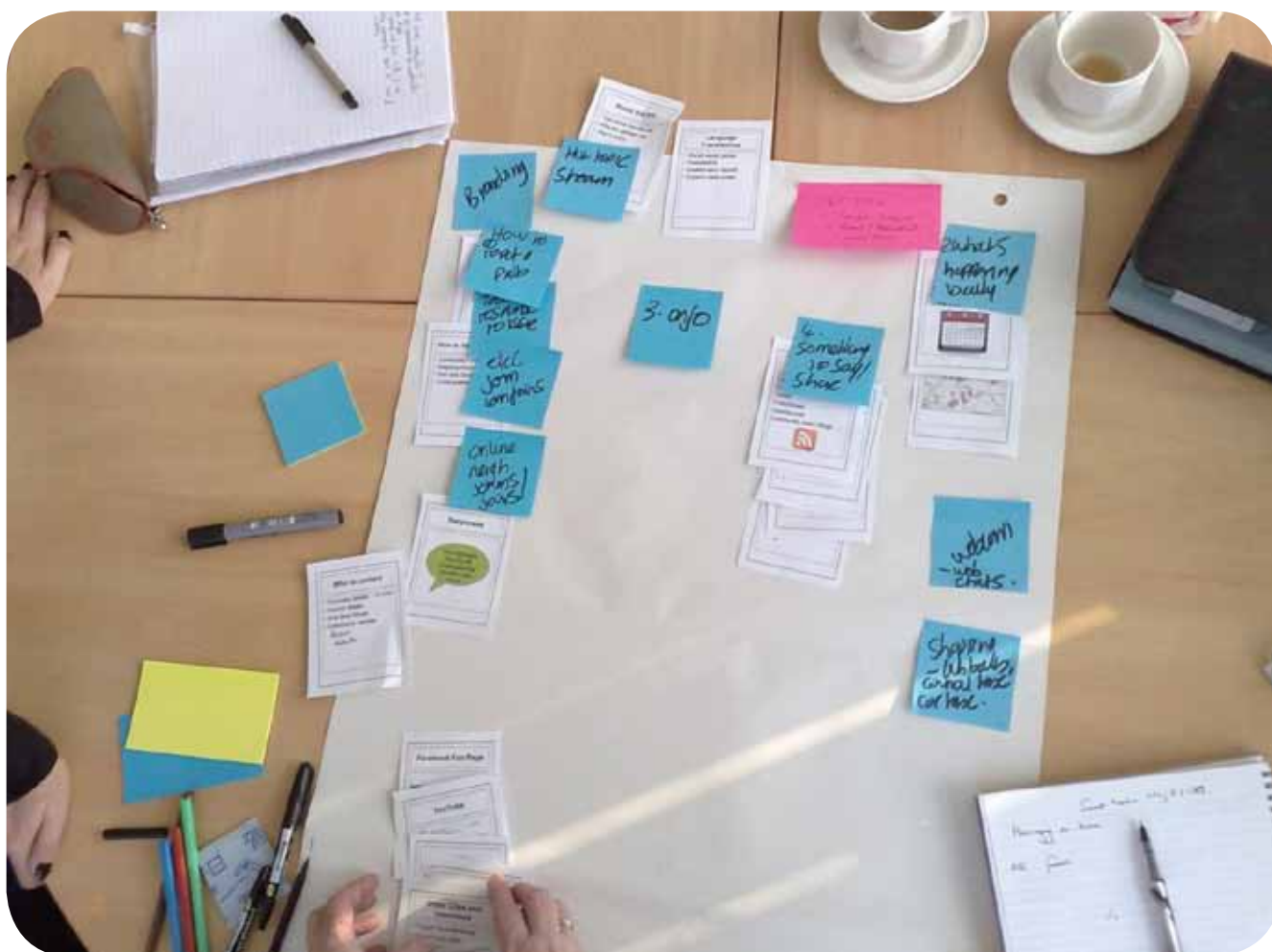
- conversations on a range of issues between residents and local county councillors, such as a proposed wind farm near Wisbech (attracting 12 comments), a passenger railway line for Wisbech, and road safety
- the repainting of a faded zebra crossing after the issue was raised by a resident on ShapeYourPlace.org
- providing a channel for residents to express their concerns regarding anti-social behaviour in play areas around Wisbech
- a channel where local people can share their ideas about how to improve their community, such as shopping areas.

Innovation and learning

The project has generated substantial new knowledge to the benefit of the public sector agencies directly involved and the wider sector. Much of the learning has been documented and is available on the Community of Practice.

Members of the project team have spoken at a national conference on Customer Insight in Public Services and taken part in the Local by Social online conference (<http://fenland.worktogether.org.uk/2010/11/07/local-by-social-online-conference/>)

A project team member will also be speaking at a future Local Government communications roadshow – for further details see <http://www.lgcomms.org.uk/documents/SocialMediaRoadshowagenda>



Collaboration

The project has promoted and strengthened partnership working across the district and county councils, the Police and the fire service. There are a number of examples of better partnership working. For example, Cambridgeshire Police have publicised ShapeYourPlace.org whilst they were conducting house-to-house enquiries in Wisbech, and the Stroke Service used the site to publicise its work amongst the partners and the wider public.

The site is also prompting the service providers to consider how they communicate jointly and collectively respond to the issues residents raise. One example is a request from a resident to know when the proposed traffic lights in De Havilland Road would be installed. As this is part of a wider development it is the responsibility of both Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council. Although the county council is the lead agency there was a need to liaise with the district council in order to post

the response. In the past this would have required two responses but now there is a joint, single response coordinated by the lead agency thus saving time, expense and providing a better service for the resident.

Governance

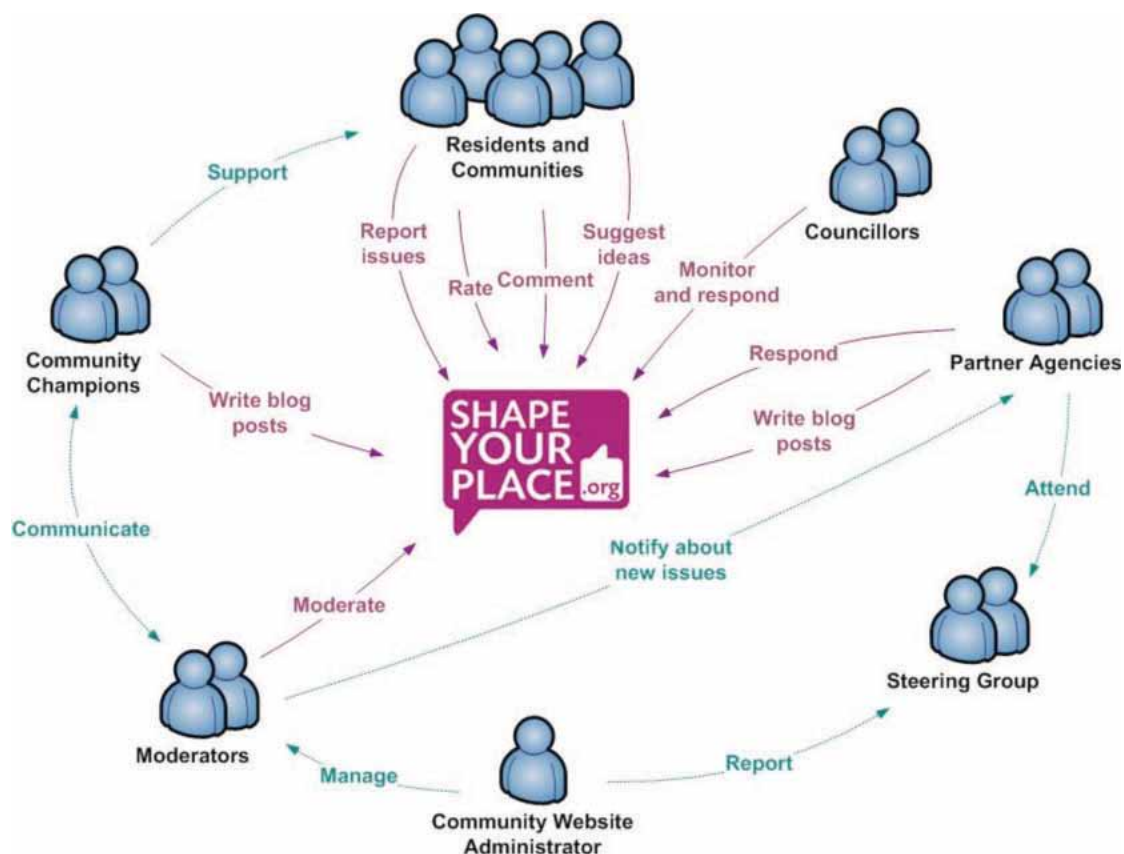
The design, development, and delivery of the website were overseen by a project board comprising representatives from each of the partners. Once the website had been built, the membership of the Project Board migrated to a Steering Group with overall responsibility for the ongoing operation and management of the website. The partners include:

- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Fenland District Council
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary
- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
- the Rosmini Centre.

Description of deliverables	Budgeted	Spend to date
Project support officer	£10,000	£3,470
Engaging users to define requirements	£5,000	£2,804
Designing and implementing the solution	£10,000	£7,368
Marketing and promoting the site	£6,500	£2,798
Disseminating lessons learnt	£12,500	£96
Supporting and maintaining the website	£28,000	£7,443

These costs are up to December 2010, the remainder of the money has been allocated to the various work streams listed in the chart.

Below is an overview of all the different roles involved in using and managing the ShapeYourPlace.org website.



A Service Level Agreement (SLA) governs the oversight of the ongoing operation of the website. The SLA requires partners to (among other things):

- ensure that an appropriate member of staff attends steering group meetings
- ensure that an appropriate number of staff are responsible for managing communications about the website, and for responding to content generated on the website
- ensure that responsibility for the website is part of someone's day-to-day role.



Resourcing

A breakdown of how the budget has been spent is included in the Fenland Social Media Project creative practice, under “Project documents”. A high-level outline of the planned budget is given below. In many areas the project has spent significantly less than these sums.

The day-to-day management of the project has been undertaken by the County Council’s Web Strategy Manager and the Commissioning and Performance Manager (Fenland), who is also Chair of the Project Board/Steering Group.

The three most time-consuming tasks encountered by project staff are:

- consulting with users to specify requirements
- facilitating collaborative working between the partners
- trouble-shooting once the site went live.



Challenges and lessons learnt

An outline of the lessons learned is available on the “Fenland Social Media Project” Community of Practice website under “project documents”.

Engagement

Engagement with key stakeholders is critical. In December 2009, the local press published an article saying that the County Council was planning to build a website costing £80,000 (in fact the website itself cost in the region of £5,000). Unfortunately, this occurred before the project team had briefed councillors, and the newspaper article causing some alarm, which was addressed. The incident ultimately had a positive outcome, as the local county councillor in Wisbech is now a keen supporter of the initiative. The lesson learnt is to engage councillors (county and district, as well as town and parish), and heads of service early and often in the process.

Communication and understanding

Furthermore, colleagues in partner organisations only began to understand and see how they could use these tools – and how the site would work – once the website was up and running. For example, the neighbourhood policing teams initially wished to have their responses vetted by the moderation team and the Police’s communications department. The project team explained most of the issues raised would be low-level enough for an officer to go into the site and respond directly – such as inquiries regarding traffic regulations within a pedestrian zone.

Project management

The timescales of the project were tight, and the community consultation, focus groups and stakeholder engagement required considerable attention. The project also found that the tendering process to commission the moderation agency, the CRB checks that the moderators had to go through, and the research for the safeguarding and moderation guidance took longer than expected. Ideally, the project would have had a project support officer in place from the beginning.

Surveying customers

Customers often did not understand some of the key terms used in the community consultation survey, such as “social networking”. Furthermore, a lot of people interviewed did not know what a councillor was. The people conducting the survey had to explain a lot of the terms to respondents. The project would have preferred to have piloted the survey before rolling it out, but the timescales did not afford this. The lesson learnt is not to make assumptions about respondents existing knowledge.



Next steps

The website is being piloted in Wisbech and the surrounding villages, and will be rolled out to Fenland's three other market towns and their surrounding villages during the first half of 2011. At the same time the site continues to be developed – for example, the project are adding:

- additional space on the home page for recent comments
- a more prominent rollover “Have Your Say” button
- a randomly changing header of photographs
- a landing map for the new home page
- the option to blog directly onto the site
- recruitment of regular guest bloggers – including Councillor Tierney, county councillor for the area
- links on local sites, eg the King's Church.

The project team is encouraging all the partners to think about ways of using and promoting the site and social media generally. To this end, Cambridgeshire County Council has recruited a Future Jobs Fund employee, part of whose role will be to capture video clips from service related events in the area. For example the National Blood Donation Service features in a video blog with one of the local coordinators and two local blood donors. Local residents featured on the site are likely to visit the site and tell their friends and neighbours, thereby promoting the site.

The Steering Group continues to meet monthly, and will review a monitoring report highlighting facts and figures on the site such as:

- number of comments, issues, questions posted
- number of response by partners
- number of monitoring interventions
- feedback from users on the site.

In addition there will be a more comprehensive quarterly report.

The project team is now working with the highways department so that issues relating to roads, such as potholes, will be automatically input into the highways fault reporting system.



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Local Government Group

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