

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL

Client interview with Clare Nelmes, Community Consultation Officer and Adam Newman, IT Officer

South Gloucestershire Council have been using INOVEM Consult for online consultations since 2006. Following a recent redesign of their website, they worked closely with INOVEM to integrate the new look and feel into their eConsultation system.

The South Gloucestershire Council branding guidance states that

“Our website is the public face of South Gloucestershire Council on the internet. When producing information that appears on the website we must ensure we are providing a high quality, professional and reliable information resource for local people.

“As a local government organisation we need to pay particular attention to being inclusive to all our citizens. This is why accessibility and usability must be a key driving force for our overall web presence.”

Clare Nelmes, Community Consultation Officer, elaborates:

“For consultations, fitting into the Council site and being part of that official online presence is very important. Citizens and respondents must be fully confident that this is a proper Council-managed site. Publishing content in a consistent format and style goes a long way to achieving a high quality, professional, reliable and trustworthy resource.

“As well as being able to have the site on an official address – <http://consultations.southglos.gov.uk> – we feel that branding and common usability across all our sites are a key part of that”.



Text size: A A | Accessibility Site search Site map Contact us

South Gloucestershire Council

HAVE YOUR SAY!

Home Consultations Community Engagement Strategy

Community Engagement Strategy

South Gloucestershire Council is committed to improving our engagement with our residents whether in their geographic or interest communities. This strategy sets out why we wish to build our community engagement processes to ensure local people feel empowered and engaged in shaping their communities and improving their quality of life.

The overarching aim of the strategy is:
To increase the involvement of people in the life of their communities and in the decision making processes that affect their quality of life and the services they receive. (Council Plan 2008-2011)

In order to achieve effective engagement the Council needs to have in place structures that allow engagement at the right 'level' and to use methods appropriate to the task. This strategy seeks to engage everyone who lives or works in South Gloucestershire - from strategic organisations and interests through to individual residents.

This strategy therefore provides a range of activities and process that together strengthen the Council's engagement with communities of place and interest to ensure communities play their part in decision making. To secure this outcome adequate time, resources and commitment will be given.

Please read the draft strategy and tell us your views by responding to our online questionnaire.

Consultation Summary

Name	Description
Community Engagement Strategy	The overarching aim of the Strategy is to: Increase the involvement of people in the life of their communities and in the decision making processes that affect their quality of life and the services they receive.
Dates	This consultation runs from 23 Jan 2008 at 12:00 until 9 Apr 2008 at 23:59.
Status	Current

Your account

- Register
- Login

Do it now

- Consultation Documents
- Respond to the Consultation
- Register my interest in this consultation
- Contact Support Team

Fast facts

- Moderation Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Consultations Terms and Conditions

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN OF THE BRAND

“Becoming part of the Council site is more than just putting a logo banner across the top, and copying a few colours and fonts. It's not just skin deep.” says Adam Newman, IT Officer responsible for fitting third party applications into the brand.

“Our site design uses a variety of common page elements, such as our 'widgets' in the right hand column, and complex controls

which we want our suppliers to replicate.”

Fortunately, INOVEM’s advanced customisation and branding capabilities were up to the task. Working from templates and graphics supplied by the Council, INOVEM fitted the consultation components into the South Gloucestershire template.

Consultation menus were fitted into the Council’s ‘Do It Now’ widget, providing consistency with ‘actions’ on other pages in the Council site. A new ‘Your Account’ widget was created for the user login and profile details, an element that is now being used in other systems on the site.

“Proper integration is more than just the obvious visual elements”, continues Adam. “We also like suppliers to fit into our navigation, including the common site breadcrumb trail. INOVEM delivered all of this.”

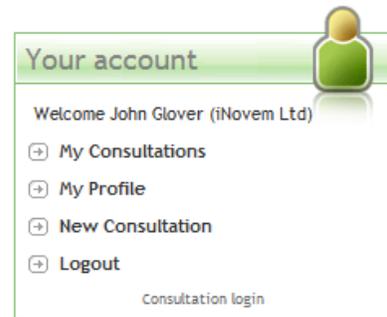
ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY

The South Gloucestershire redesign work was prompted in part by criticisms in a disability access audit report, which explicitly mentioned the consistency of layout and navigation across sub-sites and applications.

“Certain areas of the site do not have the same layout as others which may confuse certain users...” according to a Shaw Trust report referring to application sites in the context of the overall web presence.

“Consistency of use and navigation will be assessed by users across the whole of a Council’s site – users don’t know which components come from different suppliers, nor should they have to”, Adam Newman explains. “Creating a consistent usability

experience inspires user confidence and is a key factor in delivering an accessible site.”



As well as meeting and exceeding the national requirements with INOVEM Consult’s WAI-AAA rating, INOVEM were able to include other specific accessibility elements from the South Gloucestershire design, including their text size buttons (top left corner).

“These buttons allow users to view the site with larger fonts or contrasting colours – very useful for people with visual impairments” explains Adam Newman.

The buttons work by adding additional CSS stylesheets to change the font size and contrast. Implementing that feature requires code on the third party site to understand which stylesheet has been requested, and remember that setting as the user clicks around the site. According to Adam Newman: “It’s one of the more complicated parts of the site for suppliers to reproduce, and INOVEM managed it.”

INTEGRATING WITH WEBSITE METRICS

The INOVEM site also includes customised hooks into South Gloucestershire’s web metrics system, so the details of the consultation system can appear alongside

usage statistics for the rest of the South Gloucestershire site.

INOVEM Consult empowers individual staff members to create their own consultations, filling in the pages of their own consultation, and preparing online documents themselves.

“This allows staff members running consultations to become their own web editors” explains Clare Nelmes. “Whilst that empowerment is good, we do have to ensure that the quality of the pages produced meets our overall standards.

“That’s important both for accessibility and for maintaining the corporate brand. It was helpful that INOVEM could customise the features available in their page editor to match our styles and the cut-down options we have in our main Content Management system”.

For a final check before publication, South Gloucestershire will continue to use INOVEM Consult’s built in consultation approval controls.

BUILDING THE CLIENT’S REPUTATION FOR INCLUSION

“INOVEM’s flexible approach, and the way their system can fit their components into our templates rather than just being restricted to stylesheet branding, has been great” concludes Adam Newman.

“We’ve established guidelines for fitting into our brand, and INOVEM were able to implement not only all of our Priority One targets, but also the relevant Priority Two optional targets as well”.

Fully integrating a third party supplier’s system into your own site is very important.

Simple banner and colour branding is not enough – a full solution should also mimic the structural and navigational elements of your site’s design to maintain cross-site consistency, accessibility and usability. ‘Under the covers’ ability to include complex elements, such as text size changers and links to existing web analysers are very important as well.

“We’re very happy with INOVEM – the product, the integration and the support we’ve received from them” explains Clare Nelmes. “The result is a high quality, professional-looking site, seamlessly integrated into our main website.

“It should provide a very usable and trustworthy resource for the people of South Gloucestershire”.

To see South Gloucestershire’s website in action go to <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/>. Links to the eConsult consultations appear under the “Have Your Say” right hand widget, and under Communities > Consultation.

LET’S GET TOGETHER

To find out more about INOVEM eConsultation Systems, Stakeholder & Community Portals and Solutions for Local Government, call INOVEM today on +44 (0)1488 648 468 or email info@inovem.com

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