



A feasibility study concerning
Community Development in Emersons Green

“Using the Internet, together with face to face community work, as a means to enhance community life and active citizenship”

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1 Executive Summary

It is hard to see how to sustain communities in our highly mobile society and yet a sense of working together is essential if we are to maintain the trust which our democracy relies on. New communities like Emersons Green provide a focus for the issues and opportunities associated with modern living. Such communities have a high proportion of people linked to the Internet and may be ideal tests of the potential for the web to enhance local community development.

This study explores using the Internet in a new way, investigating its potential as a local point of access for people to make friends and form new, informal networks as a prelude to face to face communication. This process would be actively stimulated by on the ground, community development work which sought to use the web to enhance face to face meetings through new networks as well as conventional groups and venues.

A series of interviews with local leaders identified needs as follows:

- the need to present accurate and timely information to the community
- the need to enhance the public presence of people and organisations
- the need for members of the community to understand and engage with other people's perspectives
- the need to build bridges between the generations
- the need to develop a sense of community ownership, participation and responsible advocacy of change

A small survey of local residents confirmed an exceptionally high level of internet connectivity within this community, with as many as 90% of people online, 75% of which are connected at broadband speed.

The survey also revealed a range of personal interests and concerns held by residents. These and the themes raised by local leaders were used to develop a proposal for the design the site so it would act to bring people together and stimulate community life.

As the target audience is wide, the site will need to follow best practice on the Internet with fast download times, short pages, clear and enjoyable navigation and age-inclusive design.

The website will offer visitors different levels of involvement, from simple information-seeking through to active participation on a hosted online discussion board. It will work with the following basic principles

- Human warmth – because community is personal, and because we will be encouraging visitors to enter and become part of the community themselves.
- Creative communication – because in today's postmodern culture, people expect to receive their communication as enjoyable entertainment.
- Respected equals – because genuine dialogue and engagement can only come about between people who respect each other.

Our proposal is for a five-section approach using a modular design, which will allow great flexibility in planning, developing and introducing new content to the site.

The five site sections are:

- **News** – A page with current news from around the area, including events to be held that week, personal celebrations, public works in the area, traffic news, particularly with respect to the ring road and motorways with a link to web cams for up to the minute road status.
- **Stories** – This will feature a range of stories from people on Emersons Green. Including web diaries, videos, writing, history and alternative and quirky views with the aim of encouraging the visitor to participate.

- **Opportunities** – will contain links to a range of local amenities, businesses and networks. For example it would include sections on the Village Hall, the Library, Blackhorse Medical Centre, links to meeting places like the pubs and café, regular and special events of all sorts, new networks such as carshare, LETS scheme, local trades, buying and selling. It will contain a special area for young people.
- **Issues** – A regularly updated list of local concerns, with up to the minute information about local projects and campaigns. This might currently include law and order issues; traffic; parking; the proposed secondary school; the M4 link; children’s play park; neighbourhood watch interests. An access point to a variety of people and public bodies associated with issues.
- **Conversations**– This would consist in public conversations about anything of interest to residents. A set of stimulating inputs would be solicited to spark conversation. The site would allow people to follow each conversation as a ‘thread’ and so contribute meaningfully. It will provide a range of links so that people can make contact with others.

A series of user scenarios has been developed to show how a broad range of people might interact with the site, make new face to face relationships, establish groups, engage with issues and generally enhance the sense of belonging to the community. These include residents of all ages, public bodies, amenities and public representatives.

An essential component of the initiative is the Project Worker, who would be responsible for soliciting content and management of the website; developing a team of volunteers/ street reps; supervision of moderators and administrators of the site; facilitation of community meetings and liaison with other community leaders.

The relationship of this initiative to existing community groups is crucial. It must be independent of any political or campaigning groups or commercial

interests. It must instead seek to enhance all legitimate community interests without fear of favour.

The quality of conversation on the site would be maximised by the use of a series of regulatory controls, involving House Rules, moderators and administrators continually scanning message content, oversight by the Project Worker and accountability to a Steering Group.

New residents would be welcomed by street reps from the web community and encouraged to join. This would feel like people were joining both the web community and the 'real' community at the same time. Safety issues regarding children can be dealt with by this system of membership coupled to controls within the site.

We propose a phased development including a nine month lead in time. This would include an active marketing and recruitment phase aiming to make the whole community aware of the initiative prior to launch.

The success of this project turns about whether people can be given such a sense of its potential that they change their computer and other habits so as to reap its benefits. The signs of interest already evident give confidence that this will occur.

We conclude that Emersons Green appears to be ripe for the sort of community development envisioned in this project. There is considerable potential for synergy between 'on line' and 'on street' community life. The proposal stands a real chance, not only of success in Emersons Green, but of illustrating a quite new method of community development that will be applicable in many places and provide a new approach to building trust and a sense of participation in a flexible world.

2 Background

There is now a strong consensus among a wide range of analysts that the greatest threat to our democracy lies in the failure to nurture an adequate sense of participation among our citizens. People feel 'mistrustful, powerless and frustrated'¹ in regard to formal political systems. Such a decline in trust has been detected in many Western democracies and its root cause has been traced to a change in civil society. In the past people have met others, negotiated life, and been represented by, a host of intermediate associations, such as political parties, trades unions, churches, farmer's clubs, scouts, women's groups etc. These were places where the art of negotiating life as a collective was learnt by the ordinary citizen and a sense of belonging and trust was nurtured. Evidence points to a general decline in these groups, particularly over the last thirty years. One major contributor to this is the sheer mobility and choice available in modern life. It means that people have become less interested in their immediate locale and more selective about their leisure pursuits. The big question is how to build an adequate sense of belonging and engagement in this new environment.

Emersons Green is a quintessentially modern environment. Built over the last eight years, it is a highly mobile community both in terms of car use and house tenure. People access work and leisure opportunities over all Bristol and beyond. Traditional local politics fails to engage the majority of the residents. Local clubs and activities are making a start, but the community as a whole has little or no sense of shared history or community life. Many citizens may be leading the 'lonely and disconnected' life so common in the UK today. Many would not want the close, but potentially oppressive life of traditional local community, but still need some sense of belonging and an adequate set of relationships. What might an appropriate form of community life for the future look like? Emersons Green might be a test case.

¹ For references and details regarding background work to this proposal see *Invisible Villages- technolocalism and the enabling council* by James Crabtree, William Davies and Anna Randle published by

As the Internet has become more and more widely available so many have speculated about its potential role in building community life. Most often this has been around the potential for generating communities of interest beyond conventional geographical boundaries. Experience has shown, however, that it can be hard to develop responsible citizen engagement when the Internet is the prime or only medium of engagement. The suggestion has been made recently that the Internet could be used at a local level to encourage local community formation². Few experiments have been done in this regard and the more general difficulty of ensuring adequate engagement through the medium remains. We propose a new approach. This is to promote local association using the Internet closely coupled with face to face community development work.

The IPPR report on Active Citizenship entitled *Lonely Citizens* concluded that 'At present participating in public life is like a swimming pool, which has no shallow end. Would-be active citizens have to jump in at the deep end or remain on the edge. We need to encourage beginners in ...'

The suggestion behind this metaphor is that the amorphous nature of life today presents few points of access. Traditional clubs and societies are in decline and a general fear of commitment prevents people joining. How are people who feel stuck in their homes to engage with others? What is required is a point of access with minimal commitment, where people can simply sample what is available, even anonymously at first, look for friends or people of common interest or concern, and assess what they are getting into before they take the plunge of meeting with others. This is precisely the sort of access the internet can provide. The web offers the potential to form new, informal networks of people who simply want to make friends on their own terms and would fight shy of any formal commitments. Such networks might arise among people in similar situations such as parents of young children, homeworkers, dog walkers, teenagers, older people and those who care for

the New Local Government Network. Also *Lonely Citizens* Report of the Working Party on Active Citizenship published by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) 2004

² see *Invisible Villages*

them. The web might also link people across common interests such as lifestyle or local issue. Some of these may eventually form traditional groups.

To nurture this connectedness requires a further step. It needs someone on the ground working to establish this new community life. Existing community groups and venues would also need to be encouraged to imagine how this local web project might enhance their own activities. This combination of creative web development coupled to active face to face community work might be a fascinating way of building community life in the 21st century. It could result in people being able to access community and the whole political arena on their own terms. It could generate new initiatives for deliberation of citizens on community issues and it could foster a realistic trust between people and the institutions that serve them.

3 The Feasibility Study

We have assessed the potential for this project by investigating the situation on the ground in Emersons Green and imagining how this project would make a difference.

3.1 The Process

The study consisted of four main elements.

- **A series of interviews** with local leaders. Twenty people with a variety of interests in the community were selected and questioned about their role, the nature of community life present here and the challenges it presents. A list of those interviewed can be found in Section 4.1
- **A survey** was undertaken in order to check computer accessibility and gain first hand statements of interest from local residents. Around 600 questionnaires were distributed through The Village Hall, The Library, Emersons Green Veterinary Practice, Emersons Green Community Church and Emersons Green Primary School.

- **Design** – information and insights from the interviews and survey were considered alongside the potential for the local web community and a proposal for the project formulated.
- **Development of the report** - the study was drawn together into one coherent proposal.

The work was carried out by Chris Sunderland, Co-ordinator of Agora in consultation with Bruce Stanley, a creative communications specialist. It was overseen by a small steering group consisting of Pauline Barker (South Glos Council), Bill Robbins (Agora), Angela Paige (Blackhorse Medical Centre), Gill Clayton (Librarian), Chris Sunderland and Bruce Stanley.

3.2 The Results

3.2.1 Internet connectivity:

A very high proportion of people in Emersons Green are connected to the Internet. Our survey (3.2.3 and 4.2) showed 40 out of 44 respondents had personal access to the web. In addition leaders of Emersons Green Primary school, the library, the veterinary surgery and community church all submitted evidence of a very high and increasing level of web connectedness in this community. From the survey results it appears that around 70% of people are connected at broadband speeds. Connectivity is probably lowest among the older generations. The availability of a bank of computers and free internet access at the Library means that those without home computers could have access to this project. The library also reports success with 'silver surfers' training programmes designed to help older members of the community become computer literate. We conclude that in terms of computer availability this community is ripe for the development of a local web-based community.

3.2.2 Interviews with community leaders:

Common themes emerged from these conversations. These were taken and combined with the survey data to produce a series of User scenarios (Section

3.2.7), which imagine how the web community project might make an impact on particular people and their situations.

The themes were as follows:

- **The need to present accurate and timely information to the community** – almost everyone relayed this need. People become easily cynical about the lack of progress of local issues if they hear nothing. The long wait for a play park; the delay in the adoption of roads; progress in provision of a secondary school; each of these issues has raised anxiety and is a potential cause of ill-feeling and loss of trust. Clearly a well-used and regularly updated site could provide such information. (Scenario One)
- **The need to enhance the public presence of people and organisations** – elected councillors, health leaders, faith community leaders and those offering amenities of all sorts spoke of the need to be more powerfully present in the community. Our modern, mobile society offers few points of meeting with people. This is a continuing frustration to all those who are trying to build community life (Scenario Three).
- **The need for members of the community to understand and engage with other people’s perspectives** - everyone accepts the need to ‘consult’ today but these processes do not always lead to the building of trust or the effective delivery of services. Emersons Green Community Association has worked long and hard to involve people in local issues and finds that maintaining community involvement is almost impossible. Many local political bodies have suffered both internal and external wrangling of a destructive nature. (Scenarios Six, Seven and Eight)(see also Local Politics and Competition Policy 3.5)
- **The need to build bridges between the generations** – several people reported that relationships between adults and young people were a key area of potential anxiety. The local police reported this to be the single

issue that dominates their agenda. It is also one that they recognise will not be solved by police action alone. (Scenarios Three, Five and Eight)

- **The need to develop a sense of community ownership, participation and responsible advocacy of change** – evidence suggests that people in this community are highly mobile and suspicious of regular and potentially burdensome commitments. Groups that form tend to be ‘clones’ of national organisations rather than indigenous groups. The highest sense of community participation may be present among parents with children at the schools. People who feel disconnected may be most likely to approach problems in a destructive way. (Scenarios One, Two, Seven, Nine)

3.2.3 The Survey:

The full results of the survey are given in Section 4.2.

While 90% of respondents were Internet connected, relatively few are using message boards or chat rooms. Information and email are the most common stated uses of the computer. This is broadly in line with national trends. Once the potential of a local website became clear, we might expect people’s computer habits to change.

The interests and concerns of the local people reported in the survey were consistent with those arising from the interviews and many useful ideas were offered as to means to develop community life. These have been incorporated into the proposed design of the project.

The small group of respondents provided helpful data, but may not be representative of the community as a whole. Relying on voluntary return may have selected a group of people particularly interested in community affairs, who are more likely to be connected to the internet. Also a high proportion of the returns (40%) came from Emersons Green Primary School, meaning that mothers with children were proportionally over-represented.

3.2.4 Design of the Web Site

The following key aims informed the design process. They were

- Human warmth – because community is personal, and because we will be encouraging visitors to enter and become part of the community themselves.
- Creative communication – because in today's postmodern culture, people expect to receive their communication as enjoyable entertainment.
- Respected equals – because genuine dialogue and engagement can only come about between people who respect each other.

The architecture of the site begins with the homepage, which provides links to the five main sections of the site. The five site sections are:

3.2.4.1 Homepage

Many websites offer visitors complex and bewildering homepages, providing too many choices at the outset. Our preference is for a simple, fast-loading homepage with a striking design and links into the five main site areas.

The five main areas of the site we propose are as follows (the titles are provisional):

3.2.4.2 News.

A page with current news from around the area, including events to be held that week, public works in the area, traffic news, particularly with respect to the ring road and motorways with a link to web cams for up to the minute road status. It might also contain personal celebrations of people within the area, like weddings, significant birthdays and anniversaries.

3.2.4.3 Stories.

This will feature a range of stories from people on Emersons Green. For example

. a) **Bloggers** – people will be encouraged to keep a web diary. These are increasingly popular on the web, a cross between creative writing and personal reflection, offering insight and sense of relationship. A diary of two weeks might be encouraged initially. Particularly talented or interesting writers would be asked for more.

Example bloggers might be

- a person with their finger on the pulse of what is happening locally
- a councillor giving some detail of their varied life complete with humorous anecdotes
- a person living on Emersons Green without a car
- someone caring for an older person
- a mum recently back at work.

b) **Stories to camera** – using the widely successful ‘video nation’ format people would be encouraged to tell something about themselves to camera. These short pieces, of about 5min, would then be available on the site. Some would be fun, some serious – aim to produce a whole range.

c) **Stories as writing** – people would write stories about events in their lives that they would like to tell others about. Another opportunity for creative writing, a means of getting to know people, a range of stories of different type, to include the comic element.

d) **Personal, Family and local history** – personal histories of people currently living on Emersons Green, including where we came from before we lived here. Aiming to foster appreciation of diversity through exploration of our origins. Also listing a variety of resources available locally for exploring family and local history, pages on the Emersons Green in former times, opportunities to search out one’s own family history.

e) **Pets** – people offer a pet’s eye view of the world eg Dog owners effectively introduce themselves to others through their pets. To include picture of animal. Becomes a place that naturally leads to issues and concerns to do with pets.

3.2.4.4 Opportunities.

Contains links to a range of local businesses, amenities and networks. For example it includes sections on the Village Hall, the Library, Blackhorse Medical Centre, links to meeting places like the pubs and café, regular and special events of all sorts. It will include an area specifically for young people that they will help develop. It may include a 'swapshop' involving non-financial trading of help and skills (otherwise known as a LETS scheme), a carshare scheme, a directory of local tradespeople, as well as ordinary local trading in terms of individual buying and selling.

3.2.4.5 Issues.

A regularly updated list of local concerns, with up to the minute information about local projects and campaigns. This might currently include law and order issues; traffic; parking; the proposed secondary school; the M4 link; children's play park; neighbourhood watch interests. It would act as an access point to all local issue-based groups including Emersons Green Community Association, Mangotsfield Rural Parish Council, Neighbourhood Watch groups, South Glos Local Authority and their representatives such as local councillors and leaders of the Community Association. Direct links to each of these would be provided with photographs and links to personal story, if desired by the group in question.

3.2.4.6 Conversations

This would consist in public discussions about anything of interest to residents. A set of stimulating inputs would be solicited to spark conversation. The site would allow people to follow each conversation as a 'thread' and so contribute meaningfully. These conversations would give people a variety of options to take things further such as:

- a) email a Councillor
- b) email Community Association
- c) meet with others to talk about this
- d) take advice from the Project Worker
- e) request the project worker to convene a meeting
- f) talk to others privately by email

3.2.5 Maintenance and Use of the Site

Provision and update of content to the site will be the primary responsibility of the Project Worker, who will work continually

- to stimulate people to provide stories, news and engage in conversation on the site.
- grow and oversee a team of volunteers

(for further details see Sections 3.6.1 and 3.7)

The site will be designed in the form of a series of templates so that the Project Worker is able to continually manipulate content, including adding film, photos and stories.

The elements chosen for incorporation in the site will be assessed and prioritised according to specified criteria designed to ensure the popularity and effectiveness of the site.(Section 3.3)

People will be able to access the site in two ways. As visitors they will be able to browse all the content and get a feel for what is on offer. As members they will be able to post their own correspondence and engage with others. As people move to the area they will be visited by a street rep and invited to join the web community. This will act both to develop a sense of belonging to the local community and act as a safeguard with regard to identity. (Section 3.4 Standards and Boundaries). An active process of recruitment will precede the launch of the site. (Section 3.7 Phased Development). Each member will be invited to list their particular interests and will be automatically kept informed of any postings relevant to them.

In thinking about our audience, our primary focus is on the individual resident, with the hope of increasing their community involvement in Emersons Green.

The site should treat its users in the following ways. It will...

- Allow them to remain anonymous – providing a safe and relaxed space for exploring and asking questions.
- Offer choices so that visitors can decide their level of involvement.
- Clearly signal newly updated information so that visitors are aware that the site is worth a repeat visit.
- Inspire trust by showing respect to visitors and their views - trust being an essential element in online community.
- Not be pushy – the site won't ask me who I am or tell me what to do unless I ask for this level of involvement.
- Clearly state what the site is for and that the site is not selling anything.
- Include and affirm of people regardless of their race, religion, age, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. Content will be developed with this aim in mind.

3.2.6 Marketing the site

The effective marketing of this site is crucial to its success. From the moment of its launch it must be known throughout the community as the place to be. Its location within a small geographically-defined community gives major marketing advantages over other websites. Key marketing strategies might include:

- looking to promote the site through local amenities, such as cafes, pubs, gym etc in part exchange for promotion of the amenity through the website.

- focussed marketing activity around major public venues such as the health centre, library and village hall
- use of strategically placed media such as beer mats, postcards and car stickers
- encouraging users of the site to recruit neighbours and friends within the area, providing email and other resources about the site that they can use for this purpose
- developing angles and issuing press releases in order to engage local TV, radio and relevant local papers
- having a presence at community events
- putting on a major public event, such as a community fair at the launch of the site

3.2.5 User Scenarios

The potential benefits to individuals and the community are summarised in the following series of user scenarios

Scenario One

The Present-

A young mum is walking in the park with her toddler. The park has been a mess now for six years. The paths were not suitable for buggies for ages. No one seemed to be able to do anything about it. Talk of 'developers' and 'council' and who was responsible seemed just terribly complicated and fruitless. There was also talk of a playpark and one of those 'consultations' which you wonder whether to bother to take part in. That was ages ago now. They just never seem to get their act together

But today she spots a notice in the Park saying work will begin on the playpark on March 29th and she tells her toddler about it. 'Hey, look they are going to do it!' Toddler is suitably excited. They look forward to the day when the diggers move in, but when the appointed day dawns, nothing happens, but they see that the notice has changed. March 29th has been replaced with 'soon'. 'Typical', thinks Mum and another experience adds to her weight of growing cynicism.

The future –

All the major developments within Emersons Green are now listed on the website. Precise information is present and regularly updated as to progress. This keeps people informed but also acts as a spur to those parties who are holding things up. When Mum has her disappointment over the notice, she taps into the website. She finds the detailed plan of the proposed park, which looks really exciting, an overview of the process towards its building and a recent note added that says that although the building work has been held up, work is still expected to start within a few days. The park should be completed by the middle of May and there was to be an opening ceremony to which they were warmly invited.

Rationale

Our study has indicated that one of the key issues frustrating local councillors, the community association, health workers and others is the need to be able to communicate in a timely and accurate manner. People who do not know what is happening frequently assume the worst, lose hope and become cynical. The provision of all local information at one accessible site which is familiar to most residents will act to build a realistic trust and encourage a sense of working together.

Scenario Two

The present -

A single man on Emersons Green works in a high pressure job that takes him far and near in his car. Working times vary. Some evenings. Some weekends. When he is free he tends to collapse in front of the TV and if he is off at the weekend he is often away visiting his family. His mother in Leeds is now very frail. He has made no friends on Emersons Green and is not really sure how to. He would hesitate to join anything that required commitment. He certainly could not promise to go somewhere regularly and is not sure he could handle any more responsibility. One thing he might be interested in doing is meeting others from Poland, which is where he comes from and where some of his family remain.

The future –

When he moves in to Emersons Green, this man is visited by a neighbour who welcomes him to the area and says that the way to really get up to speed with this community is to get onto the website, meet local people and find out what is happening. He is invited to join as a member, given a user name and password. Investigating the site for the first time, he decides to see if there are any other people from Poland around. He changes his user name to something suitably Polish and places a message on the message board, 'Anyone interested in Poland?'. Three people reply. All of them with some connection with Poland. Why don't we meet at the cafe?, he proposes. New friendships are kindled.

Rationale

Our study has confirmed that people in Emersons Green lead relatively complex and high pressure lives. Both work and leisure involve travel across the city and beyond. There will be hesitation toward local initiatives that involve serious and regular commitment of time, but willingness to enter into more informal contact if it builds on personal interest.

Scenario Three

The present -

A local councillor longs to build up community life in the area, but is continually frustrated by the difficulties of the modern environment. Councillors know better than anyone how difficult local communities can be these days. There are so many serious issues that could be addressed and it is so hard to allay public cynicism. For example, a resident calls with an issue. The very next day the councillor calls to see them, but it greeted by 'We only b..... see you at election time.' How can we provide a continual 'presence' for our elected representatives so that they can help with problems and offer access to information that people need when they need it? How can we provide a means for Councillors to inspire people with new ideas and build on the energies of people of good will?

The future –

The local councillors have an established presence on the local community website. The Issues section links directly to their photographs and the ability to email them. One of them has also posted a funny story about life as a councillor in the stories section. Each week four or five local residents email their enquiries. In many instances the councillor is able to solve the issues simply by referring them to the right people or by giving timely information. The Councillor also uses the Conversations section to engage with residents about the big issues of the community, like the M4 link. With all the information there and time to think before replying, the tone of conversation is much more understanding and constructive than in the previously hostile public meetings on the subject. The Councillor also seeds new ideas to the Community through the site. How about a disco in the Village Hall? Some young people respond. A group forms to make it happen.

Rationale

Interviews with local councillors have revealed their concern to build community life and their awareness that the present system simply does not work well. The website acts to provide ready access to elected representatives of all sorts, a place for informed discussion about local issues, new opportunities for people to offer ideas and a starting point for new initiatives.

Scenario Four

The present -

A young mother has enjoyed a time at home with her newly born child. She has attended the Medical Centre and there met other new mums, some of whom have become friends. They often meet at the Café on Tuesday mornings. But now she has to go back to work. Childcare has to be arranged and it could be a nightmare without back up. She is also concerned that all the pressures will mean that she loses touch her new-found friends.

The future –

She is indeed very busy and life is organised on a very tight schedule. Drop off at the Nursery, then into work. Fight all day with a pressured office and difficult customers. Then it is pick up, make tea, talk to partner, put to bed...it never seems to stop. Except that every now and again she goes upstairs to the computer and posts a message. It is a place where somehow she can be herself, not just a mother, or partner or whatever and she can explore her own interests. Some of her friends also post on Conversations. They have established a little community and new people join each day. Their friendship has developed a babysitting scheme for the evenings and a system of cover for illness. Life seems better when you know you have friends around.

Rationale

Complex lives need back up both at an organisational and emotional level. In traditional communities much of this would have been provided by the extended family, but they are not always readily available today. The website could provide a means of building relationship despite a complex lifestyle.

Scenario Five

The present -

Cathy, aged 15 moves to the area. Her parents are concerned that she makes good friends, but Cathy is not a natural extravert. Neither she nor her parents are keen on her just hanging out with the young people at street corners. But how should she make friends? She works hard with her schoolwork and will probably get good grades, but it means that most evenings she is alone studying. Underneath all this work there is some anxiety.

The future –

As the family move in they are welcomed by a street rep for the local web community. The rep enquires whether members of the family would like to join and registers each of them, noting that Cathy is under sixteen and asking her parents to sign indicating their permission for Cathy to join. Cathy actually does most of her work on the computer these days and so when she wants a break she tries out the website. She goes to the Stories section first and finds that some of the young people have done pieces to camera to introduce themselves. That looks fun and some of them seem to be people she might get on with. Then she spots a thread in the Conversations section that includes one of them. She dares to post her first message – and the next day someone else replies. Hey! It works. Soon she is emailing a number of young people in the area and begins to feel in the swim of things. Then she spots that an adult is trying to get a drama group together. She discusses it with her parents. They are delighted. She attends an audition and gets a part. The play is something that she will never forget.

Rationale

The website provides a social space which might be particularly attractive to people like Cathy, providing a first point of meeting that gives confidence then to go on to other things.

Scenario Six

The present -

A dog on a lead with an owner close behind. They make a regular round of the park and the lanes. They meet other dog walkers repeatedly and pass the time of day, remarking on the weather and sometimes a little bit more. Some of these become friends and local things are discussed. Difficulties with other dogs. That one is vicious. That owner never picks up. Most of it is amiable and friendly, as far as it goes.

The future –

Dog walking continues but some owners are exploring a new idea. They are putting a picture of their pet on the website and having fun telling stories of a 'Dog's view of the world'. Idle fun in many ways, but another point of contact and a deepening of friendship. Of course those who do not own dogs have their views too, particularly about the use of the park. Issues are discussed in Conversations about people who leave litter, dogs who hassle people and, of course, dog mess. The local vet becomes involved and posts information about health dangers. A regular talking point develops around pets on the site, which the vet moderates. Dogowners find it hard to understand the attitudes of those without dogs and those without dogs are offended by some dog behaviours. But the site becomes a place for increased understanding. Users of the park all become more sensitised to what others are feeling. Behaviours all round begin to modify. The dog owners call each other to account for the behaviour of their dogs, now aware of the importance of their reputation and those who are wary of dogs begin to understand and appreciate how others feel.

Rationale

Appreciation of perspectives other than our own is crucial to a healthy society. This scenario shows one group of people whose love of animals and repeated interaction draws them together. The website is able to enhance this process but also bring them into touch with others who would bring a challenge. This is resourced by accurate and timely information from a specialist source.

Scenario Seven

The present -

An older couple are newly retired. They thought they would have a lot of time on their hands, but what with visiting family, doing the garden and generally enjoying life, they wonder how they ever found time for work! They sense that it might be good to build up some local friendships, but hesitate to commit to any serious responsibilities. They feel that one way and another they have shouldered enough responsibility in life. They also want to be free to go away on holiday when they want to.

The future – Hearing about the local web community, they go onto the site for fun, just to investigate. In the stories section they find lots of interesting accounts of life on Emersons Green. They decide they would like to put up a web diary of their own. They email the Project Worker to see how to do it and then set out. To their amazement they find that their web diary stimulates other newly retired to post messages in Conversations. Some of them decide to meet for lunch at the Langley occasionally. Conversation often turns to local issues and they begin to take an interest and to attend local events that they see advertised on the website.

Rationale

Reports suggest that many people, even those with what seems to be 'time on their hands' are reluctant to commit themselves to community activities today. The advantage of the local website would be to provide a first place of meeting that does not demand any commitment. From there all sorts of things might flow...

Scenario Eight

The present –

A lady living on her own is disturbed at night by a crowd of youths outside her door. They are shouting and bawling. They are obviously drunk and they seem to stay for hours. She is afraid to go out. She has heard stories of what can happen. She phones the police. They call the next day and apologise for not being able to come immediately. They have to prioritise. They advise her not to talk to the young people directly. She could all too easily become someone they pick on and taunt. A few days later it happens again. The lady is now seriously worried. There seems to be nothing that she can do. She begins to think about moving house. But who would buy her house when this sort of thing was happening?

The future –

This lady has heard about the local community website. She is not that keen on computers but she has one and knows how to work it. She goes on to the site and posts a message entitled 'Noise in Emerson Way'. In a few days messages come back from others near her house. They are disturbed too and feeling similarly helpless. The lady feels strangely comforted. At least she is not alone in this battle. She posts a message to Emersons Green Community Association. They have experience in this area and immediately organise a meeting between the residents, the police and local detached youth workers. There is clearly no easy solution. The young people are breaking no law and the police find it difficult to know what to advise. But all point to the need to develop better relationships between the generations today and to offer young people constructive things to do. By now many other people have joined in the conversation on the website about young people, including some of the young people themselves. Meetings are organised which include all the generations and a new sensitivity and understanding is born. Entrepreneurial types in the community begin to arrange new activities that cross the generations, including forming a special young people's section of the Community Association.

Rationale

Our study has indicated that the behaviour of groups of young people is a primary concern in the area. The community police report that it is their single most important issue. It is also one of the most intractable. The web community could function to help people not feel isolated, to draw in various potential resources and, most of all, to help different sides of the community to appreciate different perspectives and work together.

Scenario Nine

The present -

A new MOD family moves in. They are used to moving house regularly and have a system in place. The 'Hive' gives them information about the local area, all the schools, shopping facilities, everything. They have learnt to hit the ground running. After all they will only be in the area for two or three years. But this Emersons Green is not like a typical 'camp'. They have 200 houses in amongst everyone else. Life is less controlled. There are no military police to call on if someone misbehaves. Used to living as an isolated community it is easy to generate an 'us' and 'them' attitude toward the rest of the local community. But there must be a better way.

The future –

When they move in they are not only greeted by their 'Hive' rep but they are told about the local web community and encouraged to join. There they find out about all the local events and have a sense of meeting local people as they read their stories. Their appetite for getting stuck into the local community is whetted. First stop, the Village Hall, one member of the family signs up for one of the exercise classes. The other parent reads on the website of a new initiative with young people in the area. Someone wants to start a club in the Village Hall. Their own children feel a bit isolated and even wary of the local youth. Wouldn't this be a great way to get them involved? Members of the armed forces are naturally at ease in situations of potential conflict and our new resident feels well suited to this role. The team of people looking to put on the club gains a new and very helpful member.

Rationale

The presence of the MOD community within Emersons Green presents an interesting dynamic with both positive and negative potential outcomes for community life. There is much willingness on the part of the MOD to promote community engagement among their people. The web community would be an important first base for such people who wanted to explore how they could contribute.

Scenario Ten

The present -

Two older people live together in Emersons Green. One of them is now frail and in need of care. It is hard just to manage and they don't know many people around. A health visitor calls in occasionally to check on them, but they do worry about what the future holds. Deafness is a problem if they are in a group of people. It is easy to become frustrated when you can't hear. Then people think you are being difficult. Life feels very isolated. Just waiting really...

The future –

This couple have not bothered with the computer age, but hearing about the local web community they think that perhaps they will give it a go. They sign on at the Library for a 'silver surfers' course which gives them confidence and their instructor helps them to put together some of their interesting life stories which are posted on the web. A story about war time prompts someone else in the community to post a message. Hey I was there too! And a flow of correspondence grows. Reading about a history group that is now meeting in the library, the couple decide to brave it. And really enjoy themselves. Their group now has a web presence so they can go on talking about things outside of the meetings. Deafness is no problem on the web! They also have a sense of not being alone. There are others around who know and care.

Rationale

While almost everybody on Emersons Green has internet access, there will be some who don't. Many of these will be in the older generations. The library offers an important facility with a bank of freely available computers and courses to help people use them. The website might be an important means of encouraging older people to enjoy the web, share stories, make friends and so contribute to their general welfare and sense of belonging.

3.3 Web Design Criteria - The NICE HUM test

One printed web guide, the Internet Cool Guide, reviews websites on three criteria: excellence of content, design and originality. Our key values list extends this to seven categories, presented here as an acronym: the NICE HUM test. We believe that testing all proposed content against these values will help build and maintain a site which hums... nicely:

- **'Now' value** – basically, people become loyal to websites which are updated regularly. Weekly (or better, daily) features build traffic on a site and ensure that it is talked about.
- **Interactive value** – good websites offer visitors things to do and opportunities to contribute their own content, so that the communication is two-way rather than from site to visitor. This indicates an interest in the viewpoint of the visitor and creates genuine communication.
- **Content value** – the Internet favours information-rich sites which have strong, well-written content and depth of information. We are looking here for both quality and quantity of excellent content which meets the needs of our target audience.
- **Entertainment value** – like television, the Internet is an entertainment medium and so educational content works best when it is presented in an engaging and playful way. This approach also works best in our postmodern cultural context.
- **Human value** – the site needs to be human, warm and friendly, because we are calling for a personal response from visitors. Within the limitations of the medium, it needs to offer friendship, listening, relationship and community, and become a place where people feel they belong.

- **Uniqueness value** – it is tempting simply to take existing printed resources and dump them into web pages... but experience shows that this approach does not make best use of the medium of the net. The site will need a good proportion of original content, and overall should be a unique Internet resource.
- **Media value** – running the site will be like having our own TV station. It is presented on screen and to an audience that is used to receiving sophisticated visual input. It therefore needs to balance visuality and a rich mix of media with fast download times.

The selection of content at the launch stage and during subsequent development will be measured against these key values.

3.4 Standards and Boundaries

3.4.1 Maintaining a high quality of conversation

Several groups have expressed concern about the tone of interaction within the site. Will it become a place where a few angry voices dominate? Local politics has been dogged by this sort of behaviour and public sector leaders of all sorts are well aware of how destructive this can be. It will be addressed by a multidimensional strategy designed to promote the highest possible level of public conversation and to put in place all appropriate legal safeguards.

Level One – all users will be made aware of our **general intent** to promote the highest possible quality of public conversation.

Level Two – all users will agree to be bound by a set of **House Rules** which specify the sorts of behaviours that are and are not acceptable. These will be based on existing rules adapted from existing websites as well as published BBC online guidelines.

Level Three – use of the site will be moderated by a team of local volunteers, each responsible for areas of 'Conversations' and any other interactive sections. These people will be trained by BBC online specialists and work

under the direction of the Project Worker. Moderation will take place at several levels.

Post-moderation: Every message posted on the site will be examined by a moderator within 24 hours. If a message contravenes our House Rules the person will be publicly informed of this and asked to change their ways. Repeated or more serious offences will be referred to an administrator and may result in banning. 'Banning reports' would be presented to the Project Steering Group.

Reactive –moderation: The website will allow for any member of the public to register their offence at the contents of any message present on the site. An administrator will consider the seriousness of this complaint, referring matters of concern to the Project Worker. The message may then be removed or amended. Any serious complaints of this nature or the manner in which it is handled will be referred to the Steering Group

Pre –moderation: It is anticipated that 'Post' and 'Reactive' moderation should be the normal modes of operation for the site. Pre-moderation means that all messages are inspected prior to posting on the site. This necessitates a considerable time delay before people see their message appear and does mean that spontaneity is lost. The site will reserve the right to move into pre-moderation at particular moments, when for example there is a particularly inflammatory local situation. A decision to move into pre-moderation would be made by the Project Worker after consultation with the effected local people and members of the Project Steering Group.

Safety for those under 16 – special rules will apply to under 16 users. Identity checks at registration will confirm the identity and age of young people. They will be free to use the site as any other person and post public messages but, in line with BBC guidelines, they will be advised not to disclose inappropriate personal details, nor give private email addresses on the public message board. Under 16 users will not be given the option of sending or

receiving private emails to adults through the site, but they may communicate freely with each other.

3.4.2 Geographical limits

This work would focus on the Emersons Green area as defined by people resident within the BS16 7.. postcode and people who access facilities within this area.

3.5 Local Politics, Business and Competition Policy

In the first eight years of its life as an emerging community Emersons Green has experienced a difficult introduction to local politics. Key players in the area include: South Gloucestershire Council and Councillors, Kings' Forest Neighbourhood Forum, Emersons Green Community Association, Mangotsfield Rural Parish Council and various developers. Despite the best intentions of many of those who have given time and energy to the development of political organisations and groups, some of these groups have experienced problems with dominant personalities, hostile relationships with other groups and competition for control.

One of the keys to turning this political culture to constructive ends would be a greater involvement of residents. Emersons Green Community Association has, for example, worked consistently over several years to achieve greater levels of participation, run several well-attended meetings, built up relationships with leading figures in the public sector and has taken up a large number of community issues. Yet leaders still report a frustrating lack of engagement by the community at large. This website will aim to enhance the activities of all such campaigning groups offering a network of residents, a forum for discussion of local issues and an opportunity to post notices and engage with a large number of people. It will differ from these groups in not taking positions on particular issues.

There are a large number of voluntary and commercial interests within the area. The community website will work to enhance and publicise the activities of all, making links to existing websites and working to upgrade existing websites, where invited to do so. Work done for an existing interest will be charged out according to an established scale of fees that distinguishes between commercial and voluntary activity. Commercial interests will be invited to make an initial contribution to the development of the site. When the site is established, annual charges may be levied in accordance with increase in business generated. Work in this area will be governed by a policy of non-partisan behaviour, whereby the Project Worker will seek to respond to requests and allocate time so as to be inclusive of all who wish to be involved. The Steering Group will be mandated to oversee this aspect.

Summary of Competition Policy:

- This local community website initiative will not seek to act as a political player in the neighbourhood. It will not take positions on issues, nor seek to lobby for change.
- It's purpose will be to act solely to improve participation and engagement of residents and those with an interest in the community.
- As such it will aim to work with and enhance the activities of all the various interest groups within the community without fear or favour.
- In order to do this it is essential that it is not controlled by any one of the campaigning, political or commercial players in the area.
- The Steering Group for the project (3.9) will be set up to reflect this.

3.6 Key People

3.6.1 Project Worker

An essential component of this project is the appointment of a dedicated Project Worker. This role would be significantly different from existing roles in the public sector and would need to combine the interests and abilities of an

- Entrepreneur
- Web journalist
- Facilitator
- Community Development Worker

3.6.2 Moderators and Administrators

Local people would be invited to take an interest in different parts of the Conversations section. Those who contributed frequently and well to a particular topic might be invited to act as ‘moderators’ whereby they worked to keep their ‘threads’ of conversation alive and interesting, stimulating them with ideas and questions and encouraging compliance with our House Rules.

Others might act as ‘administrators’. Their role would be to act in a regulatory capacity, dealing with any people who were posting views that were potentially damaging to people or institutions or to the character of the site or the wider community. These people would be trained specifically for this task (see ‘Regulation’), and accountable to the Project Worker who would be in overall supervision of the site. The identity of administrators would normally be kept from the public to provide them with a level of safety.

3.6.3 Members and visitors

Anyone could visit the site as a guest, but to participate in any way such as putting up a story, or contributing to a discussion would require a person to join as a member.

Members would be signed up through an active recruitment process designed to give people a sense of joining the community and to take care of safety issues (See 'Safety'). New residents would be visited by an existing member in their street and given an initial user name and password. Alternatively people may sign up at public access points such as the library, medical centre or village hall. Important elements of this process would be some form of proof of identity, residence or legitimate interest in the area, and whether or not they were over 16. They would then use the website semi- anonymously through their chosen username, and yet be known and accountable to the administrators through their initial registration.

3.7 Phased Development

The Project might proceed in three phases:

1. Preparatory to launch of the site – a period of 9-12months preparatory work is essential to the success of the project. When the site is launched the whole community must be aware of it, content must be adequate to inspire engagement , people and structures must be in place to maintain it. The preparatory phase therefore includes:

Recruitment and training of the Project Worker - Initially working part-time under the supervision of Agora's Co-ordinator and accountable to the Project Steering Group (see Accountability), the Project Worker would work

- to produce starter content for the five sections of the site in consultation with the Designer and local people
- To recruit and train a team of moderators and administrators for the site
- To recruit the Steering Group
- To consult with local amenities and groups to optimise their presence on the website
- To organise a local recruitment process in the three month period before launch aiming for 500 members by the date of the launch.

- To put in place a strategy for making people aware of the site
- To organise a launch event such as a community fair, bringing together all local organisations and potential contributors

2. Immediate post-launch – The Project Worker post becomes full time and responsible for

- Soliciting new content for the website, management of the site
- developing a team of volunteers/ street reps who visit and recruit members from people who move into the area
- supervision of moderators and administrators of the site
- facilitation of community meetings
- liaison with other community leaders

3. A year post launch

The project is evaluated.

If it has proved successful

- the Project Worker becomes part-time at Emersons Green,
- much of the site content work is passed to local people
- local people are trained in the facilitation of meetings
- The Project Worker sets up the project in a similar S. Glos emerging community.

3.8 Criteria for evaluation

This project benefits from several very clear, objective indicators, which can be used to measure its success.

These include:

- The number of people visiting the site
- the number of people recruited to membership of the web community
- the number of people actively engaging with others through the site
- new groups that have formed by means of the web community

- the number of interactions with leading figures in the community such as the Councillors
- new community events initiated

There are also a range of 'softer' indicators such as:

- the quality of conversation on the site
- improved level of ownership and engagement on local issues
- growth of Emersons Green as an identifiable community of belonging

Each of these should be used to evaluate the impact of the project at one year and in each subsequent year. Any failures of the project will be readily evident and appropriate steps can be taken.

3.9 Structures of Accountability

Project Steering Group:- To consist of 6 – 10 people who are local residents or those with an active interest in the area. These people to be chosen as individuals, not appointed as representatives of existing local groups, to have an active interest in the project and to be in sympathy with its aims. Also to include by right the Project Worker, the Agora Co-ordinator, the Agora Chair, one representative from South Gloucestershire Council (and the Designer - for the pre-launch phase only). To meet at least four times per year and to include an annual meeting at which the project is evaluated and new steering group members elected.

Line management and training of the Project Worker: by the Agora Co-ordinator.

All other volunteers to be managed by the Project Worker and accountable through the Project Worker to the Steering Group.

3.11 Conclusions

Emersons Green appears to be ripe for the sort of community development envisioned in this project. Evidence includes:

The community already has a high level of personal internet access and public provision and training is available for all.

A series of interviews and a survey has raised awareness of the project, invited people to shape its content and provided evidence of how people perceive its potential. Many offered ideas about life here that were directly relevant to the proposed project. These were developed into a series of user scenarios which show how a broad range of people might benefit. These include residents of all ages, public bodies, amenities and public representatives.

This study demonstrates how a local web community might be expected to make an impact on several identified community needs including

- the need to present accurate and timely information to the community
- the need to enhance the public presence of people and organisations
- the need for people in the community to understand and engage with other people's perspectives
- the need to build bridges between the generations
- the need to develop a sense of community ownership, participation and responsible advocacy of change

Effective delivery of this project depends upon the presence of a Project Worker in Emersons Green, who will work according to a phased development plan.

The relationship of this initiative to existing community groups is also crucial. It must be independent of any existing political or commercial interest. It must not be seen as another campaigning organisation, but rather seek to enhance all legitimate community interests without fear of favour.

Concern about the quality of public conversation on the site can be dealt with by a series of regulatory controls, involving House Rules, moderators and administrators continually scanning messages, and oversight by the Project Worker who is accountable to a Steering Group.

New residents would be welcomed by street reps from the web community and encouraged to join. This would feel like people were joining both the web community and the 'real' community at the same time.

Safety issues regarding children can be dealt with by this system of membership coupled to controls within the site.

We propose a phased development including a nine month lead in time. This would include an active marketing and recruitment phase aiming to make the whole community aware of the initiative prior to launch.

The success of this project turns about whether people can be given such a sense of its potential that they change their computer and other habits so as to reap its benefits. The signs of interest already evident give confidence that this will occur.

We conclude that Emersons Green appears to be ripe for the sort of community development envisioned in this project. There is real potential for synergy between of 'on line' and 'on street' community life. The project stands a good chance, not only of success in Emersons Green, but of illustrating a quite new method of community development that will be applicable in many places and provide a new approach to building trust and a sense of participation in a flexible world.

4 Detail

4.1 Who was interviewed:

Our aim was to gain insights from those who have worked with the community.

Interviews were conducted with

Karen Hill, Practice manager, Blackhorse Medical Centre

Chris Llewellyn, Health visitor, Blackhorse Medical Centre, adults and older people

Angela Paige, Health Visitor, Blackhorse Medical Centre, mothers and new born

Gill Clayton, Emersons Green Library

Tim Newlove, Emersons Green Community Association

Adrian Gould, Emersons Green Community Association

Stephen Abbott, Vicar of St James Mangotsfield

Kevin Donaghy, Pastor of Emersons Green Community Church

Doreen Howell, Chair of Mangotsfield Rural Parish Council

Sandra Swan, Receptionist, The Village Hall

Valerie Lee, South Glos Councillor

Colin Hunt, South Glos Councillor

Jan Isaac, Headteacher, Emersons Green Primary School

Martin Brice, Veterinary Surgeon, Emersons Green Veterinary Practice

Carol Laverton, Community Worker, The Hive, 2 Church Farm Road

Andrew Turner, Padre, MOD community

Karen Perrett, Facilities Manager, Cleve Rugby Football Club

Howard Owen, Treasurer, Cleve Rugby Club

Jim Roxford, deputising for Louise Dembecki, community police officer

George Kousouros, Community Development Worker, South Glos

4.2 Full Survey Results

The respondents:

Approximately 600 survey forms were distributed via the Library, Village Hall, Veterinary Surgery, Community Church and Emersons Green Primary School. 44 were returned. 17 of which came through the school.

39 of the 44 gave a BS16 7.. postcode - others left this blank

35 were female, 7 were male

6 of the respondents were aged between 15 –30

19 of the respondents were aged between 30 – 40

12 of the respondents were aged between 40 - 50

3 of the respondents were aged between 50 - 60

4 of the respondents were aged between 60 - 70

Comments: The age distribution of this group may be roughly in line with the overall age distribution in the area. There is a strong female bias to the group. This may result from the method of survey and the distribution points chosen. Many of these are clearly mothers with children. 19 listed 'mothers and children' as an interest. This group may also be particularly well integrated into the community making contacts through their children and the schools.

Internet connectivity:

40 out of the 44 (91%) were connected to the internet of which 74% had a broadband connection and 26% used dial up.

Places visited in the area:

Most people visited most of the places listed with the exception of 'sports facilities' (3) and The Hive (5). So, for example, more than 20 people visited local shops, pubs, cafes, library, Village Hall, The Park and the Medical Centre with the Library being the most popular (38) and the Village Hall least (21). The 5 respondents visiting the Hive are presumably members of the MOD community.

Interests and Concerns:

People registered the following interests in order of popularity;

Walking 26

Sports 20

Mother and children 19

Lifestyle and weight loss 18

Pets 16

DIY 13

Young people 13

Cars 10

Buying and selling 10

Planning 9

Local politics 9

Meeting a partner 4

Skateboarding 3

Cycling 3

Martial Arts 2

Reading 2

Art 2
Shopping 1
Cinema 1
Cooking 1
Gardening 1
Dancing 1
Bowls 1

On meeting others

30 people said they would like to meet others in the area
6 people said they would not like to do so.

On local information

Favourite places for looking for local information were the Library (22) and the Village Hall(22).

The most valuable thing about living here

These were, in order of popularity;

Convenient facilities within walking distance (18)

A quiet, safe, clean environment (13)

Cycleways and footpaths (6)

Local schools (5)

Convenient for Bath, Bristol and countryside (4)

Green space (2)

Others included friends, café, young families, tidy properties

The biggest problem with living here

Several sets of problems were reported.

There were problems with traffic and roads eg traffic on the ring road (4), traffic in general (6), parking (6), limitations of public transport (4), too much car use for short journeys, feeling stranded without a car, poor design of road calming, car speed, no crossings

There were issues with shops. Concerns about supermarket (3), no post office (2), lack of traditional shops (2), no chip shop, no post box in North

Various problems re-young people were raised; Lack of play areas (7), need for a secondary school (4), more children's activities, more activities for teenagers, gangs of kids, kids on skateboards, underage drinking, vandalism, graffiti, lack of mother and baby places

Dog mess (2), litter, need for a public toilet, a general lack of open space, thieving and snobbery were also mentioned.

3 people said there were no significant problems

What would you like to see happen?

This produced an enormous range of ideas.

Some saw the need for a general growth in community spirit (4) and there were suggestions for several local events and groups including
A youth club (4), Cubs and Brownies (3), A ramblers group, a 'Christmas Goodwill evening', more 'fun' events rather than classes, more for school age children at Village Hall, a football team, skittles team, darts team complete with bar, an art class, sculpting class, a sewing group for the retired, markets, a new toddler group at the Village Hall

Some were looking for new facilities in the area such as a Sports/Leisure facility (3), development of retail park, a new secondary school (3), more play facilities (3), a Post Office (2), a park and ride, a DIY store, a newsagent/gift shop, a takeaway, a Virgin Megastore.

Others were looking to solve issues such as :
Yellow lines outside Village Hall, a police foot patrol, dog bins emptied more often, better transport links, Betts Green to be one way,

New avenues for local co-operation included ideas for car share, a swapshop, promotion of local sports and club facilities, listings of local businesses and trades, an events page on the website.

How do people use their computers?

Most are using computers primarily for email (36) and finding information (36). Some browse entertainment through their computer (15), just a few do chat/bulletin boards (2). Others uses include shopping (2), banking, writing, gaming, photography, work, CDs for children, internet for kids and music sites.

What appeals about the new local website?

People immediately saw the potential for finding out information (33) and keeping abreast of local events (34). Others were interested in making friends (12), meeting people with shared interests (14), engaging with local issues (16) and local history (10). One pointed to the benefit of having links with the local council and with the police.

Websites that people currently appreciate

These included events sites serving Bristol and Bath, The BBC site, E bay, Friends reunited, the Guardian, and other special interest sites.

26 people left an email address to keep in touch

4.3 Project Worker - Person Specification

This is a unique post demanding aptitudes and skills different to those normally conceived for a community development worker.

The Project Worker's skills and aptitudes will relate to four different roles:

Training may be given in some areas.

As Entrepreneur:

- Will be able to harness their skills in creative expression to produce innovative web content
- Will be able to communicate enthusiasm for the project to a wide range of people from isolated residents through to local businesses
- Will be able to prioritise and deliver

As web journalist:

- Web page creation and editing - will have knowledge of Dreamweaver and CSS. Can put text, image and video together online. Can format text and pages using CSS.
- Image creation and editing. - familiar with Photoshop or similar to create jpeg and gif. Experience with a digital camera. Must know how to take high quality images and save cropped jpegs with only one compression. In other words not making jpegs from jpegs.
- Video.- familiar with a Video editing package with real and quicktime output both streaming and download.

- Can set up and shoot video purposed for the internet. Edit for short program length and output to the best compression possible using a variety of codecs.
- Design general. - able to repurpose content to the requirements of the internet, able to make independent editorial decisions., will be attentive to detail eg in formatting pages according to site style, artistic and creative

As Facilitator:

Will be skilled in the management of interactive conversation and the constructive management of conflict.

As Community Development Worker:

Will have a passion for the development of communities, a desire to empower others and build relationships, identifying, training and encouraging potential community leaders, taking a concern for the community as a whole and able to enter empathetically into the concerns of its members. Familiar with the potential of life story.

4.4 Details of the Sponsoring Organisation

The sponsoring organisation

Agora is a charitable company dedicated to creating new spaces in society for the highest possible quality of public conversation, the building of realistic trust and the seeking of vision. Its founder and Co-ordinator and one of its Trustees live on Emersons Green and it has a track record in the production of Citizenship Education materials for both adults and young people. It also works with churches to enhance understanding of public issues and engagement with the wider community. This project is designed to further its concern to nurture active citizenship at a local level.

Contact details

Contact Chris Sunderland (Co-ordinator) or Bill Robbins, (Chair of Directors) at Project Agora, 50 Guest Avenue, Emersons Green, Bristol BS16 7GA

Tel 0117 9574652

E- mail: enquiries@agoraspace.org

For further information about Agora see www.agoraspace.org