

PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2

Final Report

November 2022



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Local Planning Authority/ies	West Oxfordshire District Council
Date Report Submitted	2 December 2022

Executive Summary

Region	South East
LA Rural-Urban Classification Category	See: Rural - 80
Project summary	The overarching purpose of the project was to use a new digital engagement platform to create a more transparent, engaging



	and interactive approach towards the identification of community infrastructure priorities and funding opportunities.
Funding allocated	£118,250
Supplier(s) Appointed	Commonplace
Consultation Topic	Local Plan and Community Infrastructure including Developer Contributions
Consultation Outcomes	<p>The main outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant increase in digital traffic with over 4,000 visits for the Local Plan consultation and over 2500 visits in relation to the Community Infrastructure pages. • Significant savings in staff time presenting and analysing consultation responses received. • Far fewer 'non-digital' responses received than would otherwise have been the case. • Positive feedback on the 'look, feel and content' of the platform during engagement sessions with Town and Parish Councils. • A new geographic/spatial understanding of where comments have come from (i.e. where respondents are based). • Also the first time respondents have been able to comment using a spatial map to specifically say what they feel is needed in their locality. • Successful use of new 'gamification' tools allowing people to have a direct say on how they would apportion available funds towards infrastructure for the first time. • Use of strong visual content and branding and simple language to promote engagement including younger demographic and other harder to reach groups.
Consultation dates	<p>Consultation on the Local Plan took place from 24 August until 5 October 2022..</p> <p>The Community Infrastructure pages were subsequently launched on 17th October 2022 and as part of this, a specific 4-week consultation took place on the District Council's Developer Contributions Revised Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) from 17 October until the 14th November 2022.</p>





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1.0 Project Summary

- **Summary:** The project has focused primarily on the provision of community infrastructure - in particular enabling local communities to understand the potential benefits associated with new development and how they can have a meaningful say on what is most needed in their local area.

Using the 'Commonplace' digital platform, we have sought to explain what we mean by infrastructure, the different forms of developer contributions that exist, provide an overview of some of the projects that have successfully been delivered in West Oxfordshire or are in the pipeline and invite views from people on what they feel is most needed in their area..

An extract from the main home page

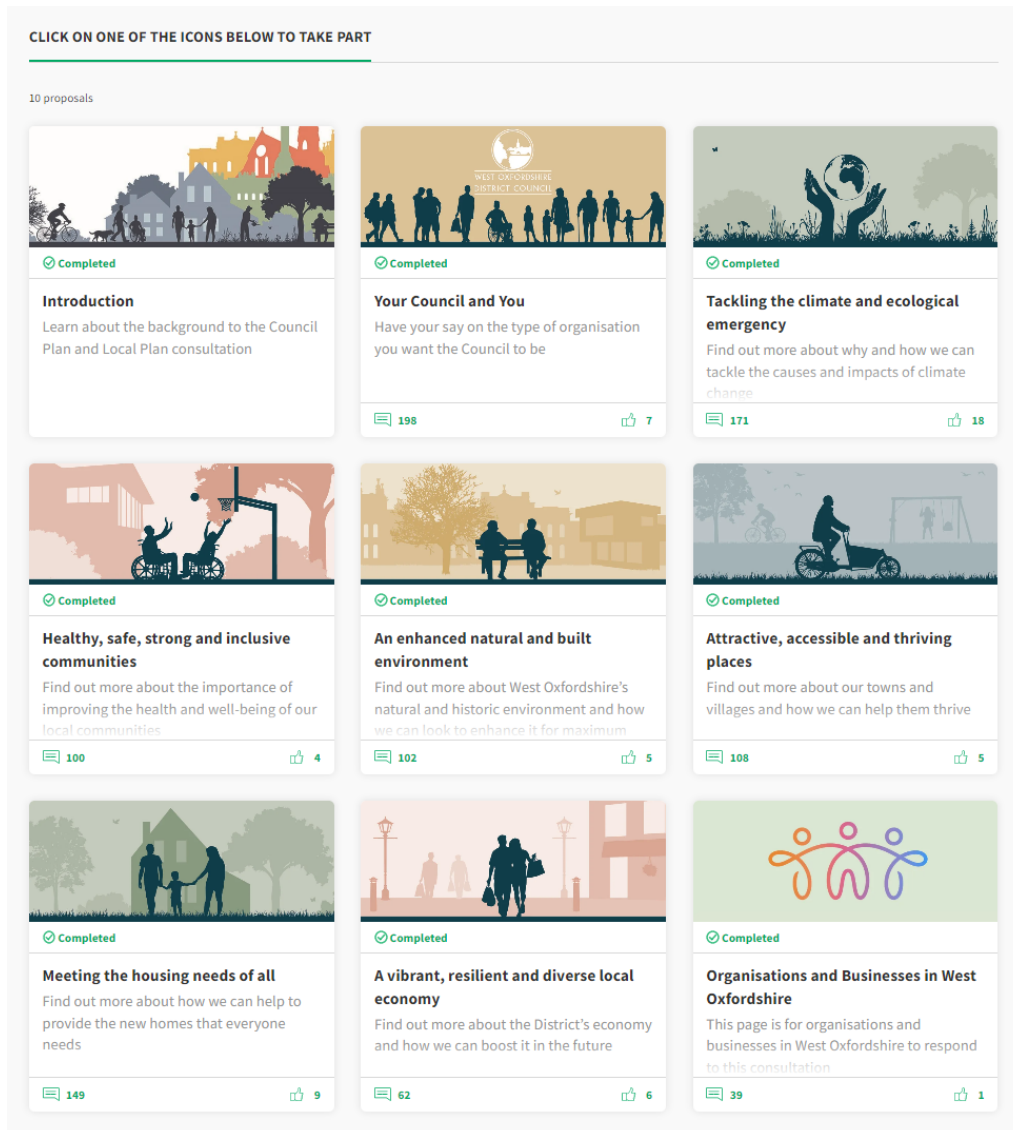
<https://communityinfrastructure.commonplace.is/> is shown below.



Due to the timings associated with the preparation of the Council's new Local Plan, the Commonplace platform was also first used to run an early stage consultation which has also helped to shape the District Council's new Council Plan.

An extract from the main home page

<https://yourvoicecounts.commonplace.is/> is shown below.



- **Status quo pre-PropTech:**

The District Council has undertaken planning related consultations in a very traditional manner, complementing face to face events with basic online material made available on the Council's website including documents being made available in PDF format with responses then sought via email or post.

Although the Council did have a digital platform (INOVEM) Officers found it to be somewhat limited both in terms of what it was capable of and also ease of use for users and Officers in processing and analysing responses post-consultation.

Officers have been keen for some time to undertake planning related consultations in a more relevant, visual and easily accessible manner and that is what we have sought to achieve following the award of funding and our acquisition of the Commonplace platform.



It is the first time we have sought such locally based feedback on what people feel is needed most in their area and the first time we have undertaken such an early consultation on the Local Plan - helping to shape the scope and content of the plan at a very early stage so that it genuinely focuses on the issues of most relevance to local people.

- **Outcomes:** The project has achieved a number of positive outcomes including:
 - Strong corporate 'buy-in' with a recognition of the benefits associated with a strong, consistent approach to digital engagement;
 - Genuine local intelligence and feedback from the 'grass roots' up on what people feel about their local area and what is needed, rather than the District Council telling people what is needed;
 - Strong level of interest and engagement from Town and Parish Councils who recognise that this is a 'different' way of them and other key stakeholders being able to have a say;
 - Strong shared working and project management within WODC including in particular very effective working arrangements between Planning and Communications teams;
 - A very strong level of response and engagement - particularly in relation to the Local Plan but also in relation to community infrastructure with a good level of digital traffic and electronic submissions compared to previous consultations carried out by the Council

- **Opportunities:**

The funding award has been absolutely instrumental to the success of this project. The most important difference it has made has been our ability to appoint a specialist digital engagement lead who has taken up all of the heavy lifting associated with the technical aspects of the project alongside specialist project management expertise to ensure key milestones have been met.

This has massively assisted the Council's Planning Policy team who have been able to focus solely on making the available content as strong and engaging as possible.

The funding has also meant that the Council has been able to acquire a much more sophisticated digital platform than has historically been the case. This has enabled us to start rolling out new methods of engagement including map-based tools and gamification enabling people to use a simple 'slider' tool to have their say on how available infrastructure funds should be apportioned.

The funding has also been invaluable regarding the branding (look and feel) of the consultation material made available as well as much closer ties with the Council's other forms of stakeholder communication including social



media.

- **Funding review:** Because WODC was building on the success and knowledge of its partner LPA, Cotswold District Council from Round 1, Officers had a good idea of the likely budgetary requirements associated with this project. As such, no major surprises were encountered. There are however a number of useful observations we can make as follows:
 - In terms of software licensing costs, these vary greatly and are not always immediately apparent (e.g. some additional costs may be hidden depending on the package chosen etc.). As such, it is clearly essential to set aside enough budget to provide flexibility of choice as far as possible. Also perhaps for suppliers to ensure they are being as transparent as possible about the costs including any ‘extras’ that can quickly add up.
 - It is impossible to overstate just how important effective marketing, branding and publicity is. This is the first time that the Council’s Planning Policy team have had such strong branding in place and certainly the closest we have worked with the Council’s communications team. This has not only helped to engender a strong level of engagement and response but also a greater degree of corporate buy-in with an appetite to now roll out the Commonplace platform to cover a range of non-planning activities.
 - The appointment/secondment of a digital engagement lead has been vital to the success of the project as has been effective project management and support from within the Council. A good proportion of any future budget should sensibly be set aside for such a purpose.
 - In terms of what we might do differently if given the choice, the only element of the original budget that wasn’t utilised was the integration of the new platform with our existing IT systems and infrastructure. This is simply because that integration wasn’t needed although this only became apparent as the project progressed. As such, the Council’s intention is to now spend that aspect of the funding bid on developing new functionality with our provider commonplace known as ‘community stories’. This responds to feedback from the engagement we have carried out, the idea being to create a digital space for local communities to be able to freely and safely share information and ideas with each other. Outside of this, the small amount of spare budget that existed was spent furthering other aspects of the project including staffing costs and marketing/branding.

	Amount Bid	Amount Spent
Software licence cost	35000	43000 (included the



		allocation tool development and voice to text)
Software provider implementation costs	7500	(spent elsewhere)
Integration into existing IT and systems infrastructure (e.g. EXACOM)	20000	25000 (will now be used to develop 'community stories' with our proptech provider following feedback from this project)
Marketing / Digital Outreach	5000	5000
Staffing including Technical Project Lead and Project Management	40000	45000 (greater than originally anticipated)
Project contingency (10%)	10750	Spent elsewhere
TOTAL	118, 250	118,00



2.0 Lessons Learned

In overall terms, the key lessons we have learned are as follows:

- To ensure that a strong project team with relevant project management expertise is put in place at an early stage to ensure that everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities and to help ensure that deadlines are met;
- Ensure that sufficient resource is set aside to appoint a digital engagement lead either through secondment from within the LPA or through a specific external appointment;
- To take a good proportion of time in selecting and appointing a preferred supplier. There is considerable variation in the different offers available and what may be most appropriate for one project/LPA may not be the right solution for another;
- To ensure that all licensing costs are fully transparent and understood;
- To ensure effective joint working and alignment with the LPA's communications team - there is little point in progressing a new digital engagement platform without telling people about it effectively;
- Be flexible and learn from others - many of the platforms available are constantly evolving and developing. Learning from others and not being afraid to try new things (e.g. gamification) is vital if we are to successfully move to a new way of engaging local communities.

These overall points are augmented with further detail in the table below.



Project stage or milestone	Approach - what process was undertaken?	Lessons Learned
<p>Getting started: Developing the business case/gaining organisational buy-in to apply for Round 2 funding.</p>	<p>Given that our partner authority Cotswold District Council was successfully awarded funding through Round 1 of the PropTech, we were fortunate in that there was already a good degree of corporate support for furthering the Council's digital engagement ambitions.</p> <p>Early discussions therefore focused primarily on the practical arrangements in terms of roles and responsibilities from a project management and resourcing perspective.</p>	<p>Our specific circumstances meant that corporate support was already effectively in place for the principle of developing the Council's digital engagement offer. However, had this not been the case, we would still suggest that seeking this early on in the project is essential not least to get the go ahead to take forward a funding bid or similar but ultimately to free up time further down the line to help focus on the main tasks at hand. In particular the procurement of an appropriate supplier/platform based on a comprehensive assessment of alternative options.</p>
<p>Procurement: developing supplier brief and project budget</p>	<p>Our approach to developing the brief and budget for this piece of work built on experience with our partner authority Cotswold District Council through Round 1. This enabled us to ensure that the specification fully met the requirements of the project and that sufficient budget was allocated to particular components, in particular, the software licensing and staffing costs. This meant that with the exception of integration with existing IT systems, the budget was spent in line with what was originally envisaged.</p>	<p>Work with other authorities who have already begun the digital journey to understand how their briefs were developed and likely budget expectations and pressures.</p> <p>Be prepared to be flexible with how the budget is spent as the project is likely to evolve.</p>
<p>Procurement: finding and appointing a supplier(S)</p>	<p>Interviews/demonstrations were held with a number of suppliers as part of WODC partner authority Cotswold District Council's Round 1</p>	<p>Ensure that an adequate amount of time is set aside for this stage to ensure that a range of different platforms and suppliers are</p>



	<p>project. This was invaluable in securing an appropriate platform enabling detailed interrogation of the suppliers to elicit the strengths and weaknesses of each platform.</p> <p>Procurement was then undertaken through the G-cloud framework.</p>	<p>considered.</p> <p>This stage should involve a broad range of team members so that all perspectives can be considered (e.g. planning, communications, corporate).</p>
<p>Onboarding: Proptech suppliers, additional consultants, and internal teams</p>	<p>The assembled project team set up a series of meetings within the appointed supplier Commonplace and established a regular pattern of internal project team meetings alongside.</p> <p>Key to the success of this was the Council's digital engagement lead who effectively acted as the main point of contact between the project team and the supplier. A dedicated point of contact at Commonplace was also vitally important.</p>	<p>Establish clear lines of communication with your appointed supplier - ideally a dedicated single point of contact.</p> <p>Agree a clear and achievable timeline to going live, building in sufficient contingency and adequate time for quality assurance etc.</p>
<p>Campaign Development: developing marketing and engagement strategies. This might also include developing survey questions, platform content, or user research.</p>	<p>We worked closely with our communications team to develop a strong communications plan and also high quality branding through the use of external design consultants.</p> <p>Survey questions and platform content were developed internally across different teams including planning policy, development management, infrastructure and communities.</p>	<p>Ensure that maximum use is made of any communications/marketing staff resources that are available, externally appointing if necessary.</p> <p>Effective branding and marketing can really help to embed a consultation in the minds of the local community - particularly if supported by a strong social media campaign.</p>



	<p>Our key focus was on generating quantifiable data and moving away from the qualitative often lengthy written responses associated with past consultations.</p> <p>We were unable to conduct user research in advance of the go-live date but we ran 3 Town and Parish Council webinars during the community infrastructure consultation so we could obtain thoughts on the look and feel and usability of the system. The feedback was extremely positive and included constructive comments on a number of different aspects. Moving forwards we are looking to further engage with the Town and Parish Councils to ensure the platform is used to its full potential.</p>	<p>Allow time for market/user research prior to go-live. Whilst this wasn't possible for WODC, had we been able to do this (rather than once the platform was up and running) there were a number of refinements/improvements we would have been able to make.</p>
<p>Campaign launch and management: working with suppliers to 'go live', attending in person / hybrid events, troubleshooting tech issues</p>	<p>Commonplace provided a dedicated resource who was able to oversee the whole process leading up to the go-live stage.</p> <p>Having a 'go-to' person was vitally important to the success of the project and she was always on hand via a telephone call or virtual meeting to advise on any issues arising.</p> <p>She also produced some very helpful 'explainer' videos which were made available on the platform to ensure users were able to easily find their way around.</p>	<p>Ensure that your appointed supplier is able to offer a dedicated resource particularly in the run-up to going live.</p> <p>Allow adequate time for quality assurance prior to going live.</p> <p>Assuming resources allow, ensure the LPA has a dedicated digital engagement lead in place.</p>



	<p>From the Council's perspective, having a dedicated digital engagement lead was vital - particularly for fine tuning content and making changes in the run up to going live.</p> <p>Throughout the campaign, the platform also allowed us to send out regular news updates and prompts to maintain interest and promote maximum engagement.</p>	
<p>Campaign wrap-up: Closing campaigns, running analysis, agreeing next steps</p>	<p>The Council's communications team were used to increase social media and other media coverage towards the end of the consultation period, in addition to the regular updates sent out using the commonplace platform.</p> <p>As is often the case with planning related consultations, a large number of comments were submitted towards the end of the consultation period, highlighting the need for strong media presence at this stage.</p> <p>The responses received are in the process of being analysed - both in quantitative terms where survey style questions were asked - and in qualitative terms where open 'free text' style questions were asked.</p> <p>Further consultation is proposed in the new year both in relation to the Local Plan and the provision of community infrastructure. This is</p>	<p>Ensure a strong media presence and prompts in the final stages of consultation as this is when a large number of responses are often received.</p> <p>Look to procure a system that is able to effectively ask quantitative survey style questions as this greatly increases the ability to interrogate and present data post-consultation, makes it simple and quick for people to respond and to provide effective feedback.</p> <p>In considering next steps, it is important not only to consider the responses received and who said what but also whether the consultation has achieved its objectives and what worked well and not so well.</p> <p>For instance, if fewer younger age groups commented than expected/hoped for - why</p>



	<p>anticipated to include further focused engagement with Town and Parish Councils and younger age groups building on the Council's recent Youth Needs Assessment.</p>	<p>might that have been the case and what could have been done differently?</p>
<p>Feedback loops: e.g. developing opportunities for ongoing feedback from the community, following up with people who responded to the consultation, sharing consultation insights with key stakeholders</p>	<p>Officers are in the process of analysing the responses received with a view to feeding back to those who took part in the consultations including through a short consultation summary report. This will purposefully include lots of visuals and short snappy analysis to ensure it is engaging, clear and concise to the reader.</p> <p>We are also proposing further follow up engagement with key groups including Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholder groups including a mixture of digital and face to face techniques.</p>	<p>It is very important to provide effective feedback to those taking part in such consultations.</p> <p>Some platforms allow this to happen during the consultation which can be very effective i.e. 'so far the majority of people agree or disagree that....' or a 'wordcloud' illustrating the main phrases being put forward.</p> <p>Use the digital platform to thank people for submissions and clearly explain what is going to happen next including news updates etc.</p>



Final Reflections: Where applicable, please also respond to the following questions:

- How did you conduct community outreach (digital and/or in person)? What approach, including timelines, budget, and tools were adopted?

Our community outreach programme comprised a combination of digital engagement using the commonplace platform and other measures including virtual webinars and face-to-face workshop sessions with town and parish councils and other key stakeholders.

In terms of timelines, as outlined above, the timing of events was such that having acquired the commonplace platform, the Council used it not only to facilitate initial consultation on the new Local Plan but also in relation to community infrastructure including consultation on the Council's revised draft developer contributions SPD. Consultation on the Local Plan took place over a 6-week period from 24 August - 5 October 2022. The community infrastructure commonplace platform was launched on 17th October 2022 with consultation on the revised draft SPD taking place over 4-weeks from 17 October to 14 November 2022.

Budget expenditure was focused primarily on the acquisition of the commonplace platform and associated staffing including the appointment of a specialist digital engagement lead. A proportion of the budget was used to support and publicise the implementation of the new system including social media, marketing and branding.

A smaller proportion of the budget was used to facilitate the physical events that took place as part of the Local Plan consultation including venue hire, physical exhibition materials and catering etc.

- Looking back at this project, was there additional guidance or support from DLUHC or other stakeholders that would have been helpful to work through these and other stages of delivery?

The Council have found the support of DLUHC to be very helpful throughout the project including the early stage advice on the procurement processes, advice on user research and through learn and share type sessions with other round 2 LPAs.

There is nothing specific that we are able to highlight as lacking or requiring significant additional support but would reiterate



how helpful we found the learn and share type sessions and would suggest that it would be helpful to establish an ongoing network/forum of users to enable those conversations to continue.

- What was the primary reason you chose your particular PropTech supplier?

The primary reason we opted for commonplace was that we were building on the experience of our partner LPA Cotswold District Council who were successful during Round 1 and acquired the commonplace platform as part of that process.

Commonplace was chosen after extensive market research including demonstration sessions from around 6 different suppliers. It was agreed internally that commonplace was well-placed to provide the best support for planning related consultations (including at the more formal stages of plan-making) and non-planning consultations.

- Were there any wider surprises which surfaced through undertaking the project?

No significant surprises as Officers were already familiar with the commonplace platform based on Cotswold's Round 1 experience. However, there were a number of important lessons learned and aspects that we would have tackled differently with the benefit of hindsight. These are summarised in Section 5.0 below.



3.0 Pilot Outcomes

- **Proposed Outcomes:** What outcomes were you aiming to achieve? To what extent were these achieved? What were the main outcomes (quantitative and qualitative) of your project? **(Please use the attached spreadsheet to detail this further).**

The main outcomes being aimed for through this project as set out in our original bid document are summarised below together with some commentary on the extent to which they were successfully achieved. Further detail is provided in the separate excel spreadsheet

A centralised, transparent and accessible web-based resource, that can also be downloaded as an app, for local communities to better understand and interrogate local community infrastructure priorities and funding opportunities.

Comment: Achieved - albeit slightly behind schedule due to the necessary timing of consultation on the Local Plan. Providing local communities with a variety of information on community infrastructure including examples of projects already delivered and enabling people to put forward their own thoughts on what is most needed in their local area. The platform is intended to be iterative and will be added to as more information becomes available.

Reduced resource burden on the District Council as local communities are more able to 'self-serve' and establish information requirements for themselves.

Comment: As the platform has only been in place for a short time, it is difficult to quantify and demonstrate a tangible reduction in the amount of enquiries coming forward but we anticipate that as word continues to spread and the platform is added to, that it will become the 'go-to' resource for local communities to find out more about community infrastructure, thus keeping enquiries via email and telephone to a minimum.

Further consultation on the District Council's Revised Draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) leading to adoption during 2022.

Comment: Achieved - consultation on the revised draft SPD took place over 4-weeks from 17 October to 14 November 2022. 19 representations were received via commonplace compared to 11 via email. The total number of representations at 30 was more than was received during an initial period of consultation in 2020 (25 representations) and has also been augmented by a number of more general representations submitted via the commonplace platform including ideas for specific improvements needed in the local area.



A robust, transparent and up-to-date understanding of local community development priorities, feeding into the District Council's forthcoming Local Plan review and associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

Comment: Achieved and also ongoing. The platform has allowed us to create an interactive map of the District whereby users are able to 'drop a pin' and say what they think is most needed in a particular area. The information available through the map will be used in conjunction with other evidence to help identify future infrastructure requirements to support planned growth in the District to 2041.

Improving the District Council's overall approach to securing developer contributions and other forms of funding for community infrastructure so as to ensure maximum benefits are achieved.

Comment: Achieved - the platform which has been established has allowed us to not only explain how developer contributions will be secured in West Oxfordshire (i.e. what type, how and when) but also to enable local communities to have their own say on what they feel is most needed. The Council's intention is to feed this information into the review of the Local Plan and to also take it into account in processes such as neighbourhood planning and when discussions are taking place with developers on potential planning obligations.

Providing support and additional information to inform grant approval processes and bidding for external funds as appropriate.

Comment: Achieved in part. The platform has enabled the District Council to create a useful repository of information on the subject of developer contributions and community infrastructure. Further information needs to be added however regarding external funding opportunities and processes. As the creation of the platform is very much intended to be an iterative process, this information will be added at a later date.

Shared learning and best practice on digital engagement with our partner local authorities Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council.

Comment: We have continued to work closely with Cotswold District Council, building on their experiences of Round 1. This has helped us to ensure that the content of the new West Oxfordshire commonplace platform was pitched right in terms of the style of language, level of detail as well as highlighting the importance of effective branding and social media coverage.

Given the successes achieved to date, it is likely that the same platform will now be rolled out for Forest of Dean District Council - thus furthering the opportunities for shared learning and best practice moving forwards.



- **Baseline data:** what existing data did you use to compare your project's outcomes to? Did you review or change this approach at any point? How does your baseline data compare with the outcomes achieved in your Round 2 PropTech project?

As outlined above, the development of the commonplace platform was essentially used for two purposes - to support initial consultation on our new Local Plan and to enable feedback on local community infrastructure priorities including the Council's approach to securing developer contributions.

In terms of baseline information, we are therefore able to compare past experiences both in relation to the Local Plan and also more specifically on the topic of community infrastructure and developer contributions including previous consultation carried out in 2020.

For the Local Plan, this was the first time the Council has undertaken such an early and high-level consultation essentially seeking views on the potential 'scope' of the local plan. Previously we have moved straight to the presentation of a series of issues and options. This alternative approach to early consultation appears to have been very successful with 1,120 responses from 432 respondents. This compares to just 120 respondents during the first substantive consultation on our previous Local Plan. Given the survey style nature of the questions we were able to ask, it is also the first time that the Council has held such a raft of quantitative information upon which to take forward the scope and content of its Local Plan.

In terms of the community infrastructure aspects of the project, many elements such as the online mapping tool have not been used before making baseline comparisons difficult. However, for the developer contributions SPD specifically, we can see that we achieved a slight increase in the number of respondents making comments with a good proportion of those using the online platform in preference to email or letter.

- **Measurement challenges:** how did you measure the impact of your outcomes? Did you have any challenges assessing the impact of your project? If so, in what ways?

The potential qualitative and quantitative measurables set out in our original bid document are listed below along with some related commentary on delivery and challenges:

- Direct user feedback on the accessibility and ease of use of the new platform

Comment:

We have hosted three online webinars with Town and Parish Councils and sought direct feedback on the look, feel and content of

the platform. The response was very positive and we now intend to carry out further engagement to help improve future consultation activities moving forwards. This will also include engagement with younger age groups.

- The proportion of responses received from different age groups, identified hard to reach groups, different geographical areas and through different channels e.g. online, social media

Please see annex 1 and 2 for a breakdown of this information.

- New community infrastructure projects that come forward as a direct result of ideas and suggestions put forward through the new platform

Using the spatial mapping tool, we have already had 67 suggested projects put forward across the District as shown on the map extract below. Officers will now further consider these and look to take forward and further discuss as appropriate.



- Key project milestones and overall deadlines having been met.



Due to the necessary timing of consultation on the Local Plan, that project had to take priority over the community infrastructure project that formed the basis of the Council's initial bid. This meant that the key milestones for the latter including the go-live date etc. were not able to be met.

However, the local plan consultation was able to act as something of a trial run, ensuring that the launch of the community infrastructure project was largely problem-free.

- **Demographics:** (if applicable) how did you collect demographic data as part of your consultation? If so, please share any demographic breakdown of consultation respondents (e.g. age, gender etc). How does the demographic of your PropTech funded consultation compare with previous consultation responses?

The commonplace platform collects demographic information as part of the consultation process. Annex 2 shows the breakdown of respondents by age and gender for both the Local Plan consultation and those who responded to the community infrastructure project including the revised draft developer contributions SPD.

Because the Council has not consistently collected demographic information through previous consultations, it is difficult to make a meaningful benchmark comparison. However, anecdotally we know that previous planning-related consultations have tended to attract responses from older age groups.

As West Oxfordshire has a relatively low proportion of BAME residents, we also believe that the vast majority of previous consultation responses have come from White British residents.

With the District Council having acquired the commonplace platform and now being in a position to have a much clearer understanding of which age and ethnic groups are responding to our consultations, we will look to tailor our approach accordingly (such as the use of classroom packs to engage with younger audiences).

- **Cost effectiveness:** did a digital engagement approach save time or resources compared with traditional engagement approaches? If so, how was this measured?

Yes, there has been definite time and cost savings to the Council through increased use of digital engagement. This includes the following:

- Fewer hard copy consultation documents having to be printed and circulated thus saving printing and postage costs;
- Greatly reduced Officer time in processing and analysing responses received;



- A reduction in the number of face to face meetings and exhibition materials needed;
- Less Officer time in dealing with general enquiries and queries by virtue of the fact that all material has been made available in a single convenient location; and
- The online mapping tool has allowed us to gain valuable insights into local community priorities which would only have been possible had extensive resources been put into some form of community outreach programme.

4.0 Community Feedback

- **Summary of community consultation:** what was the focus for engagement and what questions were asked? How were these questions decided? Were there any surprises (either in responses and/or who responded)?

The intended focus for engagement was the topic of community infrastructure, including consultation on the District Council's revised draft developer contributions supplementary planning document.

However, due to the timing of the Local Plan, having acquired the commonplace platform, the first consultation which took place related to the Local Plan and comprised a high-level scoping type consultation on which potential 'areas of focus' the new local plan should look to address.

Survey style questions were asked on a thematic basis with short introductory videos from District Councillors. The questions were determined through a combination of Officer workshops and discussions with Members.

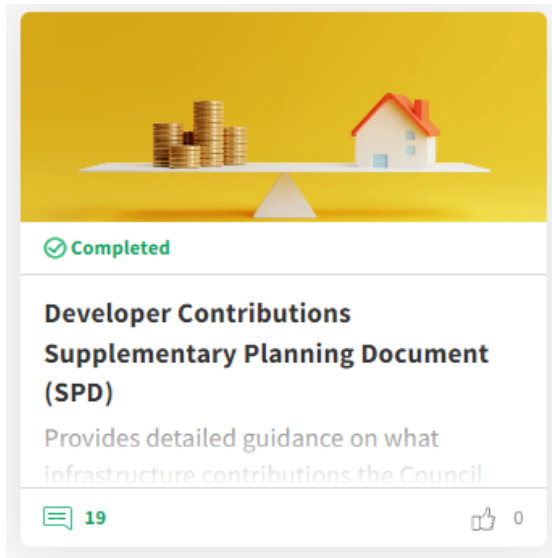
CLICK ON ONE OF THE ICONS BELOW TO TAKE PART

10 proposals

<p>Completed</p> <p>Introduction Learn about the background to the Council Plan and Local Plan consultation</p> <p>198 7</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Your Council and You Have your say on the type of organisation you want the Council to be</p> <p>171 18</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Tackling the climate and ecological emergency Find out more about why and how we can tackle the causes and impacts of climate change</p> <p>100 4</p>
<p>Completed</p> <p>Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities Find out more about the importance of improving the health and well-being of our local communities</p> <p>102 5</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>An enhanced natural and built environment Find out more about West Oxfordshire's natural and historic environment and how we can look to enhance it for maximum</p> <p>108 5</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Attractive, accessible and thriving places Find out more about our towns and villages and how we can help them thrive</p> <p>149 9</p>
<p>Completed</p> <p>Meeting the housing needs of all Find out more about how we can help to provide the new homes that everyone needs</p> <p>62 6</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy Find out more about the District's economy and how we can boost it in the future</p> <p>39 1</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Organisations and Businesses in West Oxfordshire This page is for organisations and businesses in West Oxfordshire to respond to this consultation</p>

A good level of response was received with general support for many of the initial ideas put forward for discussion. There were no major surprises although it was notable that there was not universal support for tackling the climate emergency as a core area of focus, and that instead the Council should focus on issues that are closer to home and more in its direct control.

For the community infrastructure project, different views were sought in a number of ways. For the Council's developer contributions SPD, a number of survey style questions were asked along with the option of providing 'free text' responses alongside.



Other more general views and responses were sought in a number of different ways including a 'budget game' where people were asked to prioritise and allocate a finite number of points towards different types of infrastructure, a quickfire 'click on a tile' option and a map-based tool for dropping a pin to suggest particular projects in specific locations.

Using the images below, tell us what is most important to you:

Select one or more options



Affordable homes to buy



Affordable homes to rent



Opportunities for self-build housing



Early years and childcare provision



Primary school places



Secondary school places



Better roads



Opportunities for walking



Opportunities for cycling



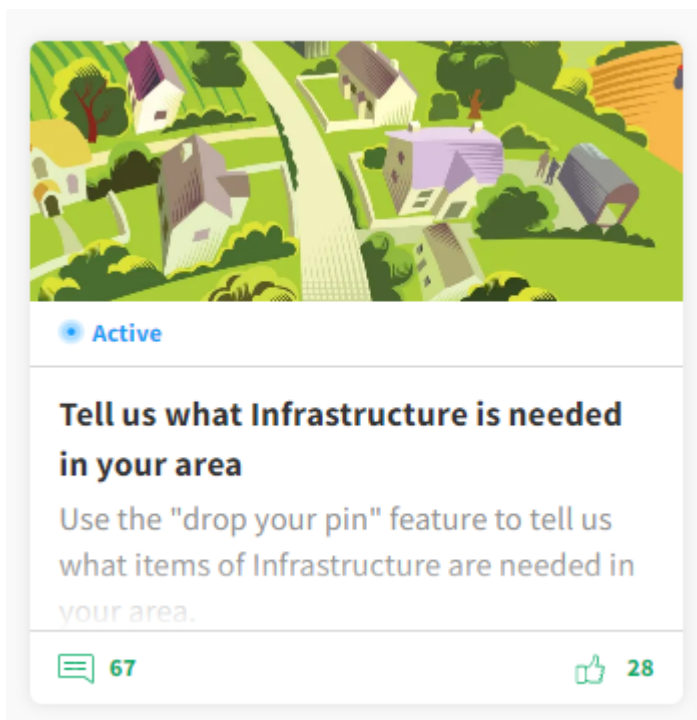
Improved public transport



Play areas



Skate parks



There were no major surprises but Officers were particularly pleased with the take-up of the map-based tool for identifying specific local infrastructure projects.

- **Summary of community responses:** what were the key themes and learnings from the consultation?

Local Plan

- Good general support for the various 'areas of focus' which the Council has identified as potentially forming the basis of its new Local Plan.
- Make information available in a succinct and visually engaging manner.
- Offer up different options for those wishing to respond e.g. quickfire yes/no or sentiment questions for those with only a few minutes to respond and fuller survey style questions for those with more time.
- Many developers/landowners still choose to submit lengthy comments via email which then need to be processed and analysed - adding to Officer time.

Community Infrastructure

- Good general support for the Council's overall approach to developer contributions.



- Considerable interest in map-based functionality to enable people to have a very specific say on their local area.
 - Need to make information as interesting and visual as possible even if the topic is rather 'dry'.
 - Embedded videos useful for breaking up text and information and also able to be used to explain how to effectively use the platform.
- **Delivering on feedback:** how has the community feedback shaped the project delivery plans? How has this validated, challenged, evolved key assumptions and potential project outcomes?

Local Plan

The outcome of the consultation will directly influence the scope and content of the new Local Plan as it takes shape. Because we have clear quantifiable data, this will enable us to properly demonstrate to local communities how their views have been taken into account.

Community Infrastructure

The outcome of the consultation on the revised draft developer contributions SPD will be used to inform the final adoption version prior to consideration by Members. This will be accompanied by a consultation summary report, clearly explaining how the various issues raised have been taken into account.

The other more general and ongoing responses received will help to inform the Council's understanding of local infrastructure priorities, feeding into the Local Plan and its supporting evidence base as well as future discussions on potential developer contributions and neighbourhood planning.

- **Community testimonials:**

Although we have no direct testimonials available at the time of writing, as part of the community infrastructure project, we ran three Town and Parish Council webinars during which we asked participants to comment on the appearance and functionality of the platform. The feedback was extremely positive with a number of constructive comments received which we have already taken on board through minor changes and additions.

We are also looking to establish a regular user group moving forwards so we can further refine and improve our approach in response to feedback..



5.0 Conclusions and Policy Reflections

- If you could re-start this project what, if anything, would you do differently?

In overall terms, the community infrastructure project has gone well, with the only significant issue being the fact that there was some slippage in the timetable due to a corporate need for consultation to take place on the local plan as a more immediate priority. This meant that the original project milestones (go-live date etc.) were not achieved.

We would also like to have found time to do more user research in advance of the project going live rather than retrospectively with Town and Parish Councils once it was up and running.

Finally, we would have provided our supplier with a more reasonable timeframe for quality assurance.

- What longer-term changes, if any, do you expect to make as a result of this pilot?

We anticipate that a greater proportion of the Council's consultation activities will take place digitally via the commonplace platform. This is expected to include both planning and non-planning activities with a budget consultation about to go live at the time of writing.

This is likely to mean that wherever possible we seek views in a quantifiable data driven manner so as to facilitate ease of analysis and reporting.

It is also likely that the platform will be rolled out (subject to resources) to our other partner LPA - the Forest of Dean District Council.

- If not, why - what barriers are preventing long term adoption?

The only potential barrier is likely to be long-term budget / resource availability beyond the initial funding period enabled by our successful bid.

- What (if any) other stakeholders (outside of those who responded to consultations) do you think should be involved alongside LPAs to support long term adoption of digital planning?

We would suggest that a key focus should be developers, agents and landowners as there appears to be a barrier to them utilising digital platforms.

Continued DHLUC support including the establishment and support of best practice groups and networks will also be vital.

- Policy reflections:



- Where do you think further guidance is required, either for local authorities and the wider PropTech sector?

Establishment of best practice groups and networks, demonstrator sessions arranged for LPAs to see what is available on a regular basis as this is a fast moving sector.

- How could DLUHC better support LPAs in the future with the further adoption of digital citizen engagement tools, best practice guidance, or other support?

Further funding available to other LPAs, working with PINS to streamline the formal stages of plan-making. Continuing to work with LPAs to test new technological solutions (e.g. use of AI to analyse responses).



6.0 Additional reflections and feedback for DLUHC (optional)

7.0 Appendices

Annex 1 - Community Infrastructure paid for ad campaign results and preparation

Annex 2 - Demographic information charts for Your Voice and Community infrastructure projects

Annex 3 - Round 2 Outcome Summary