e-community council

Deliverable D1
Version 2.1

e-Community Council User Requirements Specification

Authors: Angus Whyte, Ann Macintosh, Andy McKay-Hubbard, and Danae Shell.

International Teledemocracy Centre, Napier University

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Document History

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1.0	17 August 2004	First Draft, for comment at Steering Group meeting on 24th August 2004.
1.1	26 August 2004	Revised incorporating comments from Steering Group. Accepted by Steering Group
2.1	29 July 2005	Revised to reflect pilot results
2.2	5 Sept 2005	Revised incorporating comments from Steering Group.

Contents

1. Introduction

This report is the first from a project to develop appropriate tools and techniques to support Community Councillors, and details the user requirements for the project. The project duration is Feb 2004 to Jan 2006.

The overarching aim of this project is to investigate how technology can be developed to help regenerate democracy at the local community level. Community councils are the 'grass roots' level of local government in Scotland. They are, by law, made up of local residents, giving them direct access to their constituents at a more detailed daily level than most politicians could ever hope to achieve. Living in the community they serve, they know personally many of the issues and can readily judge the impact of new or changed policies and suggestions from government. Currently they represent their constituents as best they can, relying on word-of-mouth and may therefore not be as inclusive as they otherwise might be. They are often given little time to consider fairly major proposals before their considered input is required. This project aims to address these problems by developing and testing a suite of e-democracy tools to support Community Councils.

The partners in this project are Stirling Council, the Association of Community Councils for the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park area, Stirling Assembly, the Association of Scottish Community Councils and Napier University. The project has the support of Dr Sylvia Jackson MSP. The participating Community Councils are Cambusbarron, Thornhill & Blairdrummond, Torbrex, Strathfillan, Stepps, and Bannockburn. In June 2004 they were joined by a 7th, Drymen Community Council. All except Stepps (North Lanarkshire) are located in the Stirling area of central Scotland.

Further details of the background to the project and its success criteria are given in a complementary report to this, "*D2 Towards and e-Democracy Model for Communities*".

1.1. Purpose

The specification outlines requirements for a 'toolkit' the overall purpose of which is to help Community Councils to engage with the community and participate in decision making by government and service providers. The intended audience for this document includes the project Steering Group, Community Councils (in particular the 7 taking part), the Scottish Executive and the public who have funded the project.

This specification replaces a draft specification, provided for Phase 1 of the project. The aims of Phase 1 included developing version one of the e-Community Council Toolkit. The phase 1 requirements were drawn from the project's Steering Group and particularly Strathfillan Community Council who were the focus of this pilot phase. The specification has now been

updated to reflect their experience of phase 1 and the requirements of the other participating Community Councils.

1.2. Scope

The resulting software product will be the "e-Community Council toolkit", which will comprise a number of integrated "weblog-based tools".

The overall purpose of the e-Community Council toolkit can be defined as to facilitate the work of Community Councillors, helping them to engage with the community and represent its views. It will do this by supporting:-

- Provision of information and communication between Community Councillors, and between Community Councillors and the public.

- "top-down" consultations on behalf of the local authority and other public agencies

- "bottom-up" participation of community members in the work of the Community Council

- communication between Community Councillors and the Local Authority and other public agencies

Therefore the toolkit purpose can be defined as to assist and encourage its users to do the following:-

Access and disseminate information
An e-community council toolkit needs to provide access to the many consultation documents originating from local or national government along with any supporting material. It also needs to provide access to relevant information arising from the Community Council - its meetings and other activities.

Respond to consultations
An e-Community Council toolkit needs to help the Community Councils to coordinate their response to the many consultations they receive, so that the responses take account of the views of a wider range of community members.

Support bottom-up participation
An e-Community Council toolkit needs to support the gathering of views and ideas from the Community and help the Community Council to respond to these.

Communicate with each other
An e-community council toolkit needs to enhance the communication links that community councils have. These are the links between
- Community Councillors
- The Community Council and the community it serves
- The Community Council and its local authority

- The Community Council and other external bodies, including the police, health authorities and other public agencies
- Other Community Councils and their collective bodies.

Co-ordinate the workload of the Community Council
An e-Community Council toolkit needs to support the co-ordination tasks of the Community Council typically undertaken by the Secretary.

The toolkit will be operated as a centrally managed web-based service, to be provided by ITC for the duration of the project, and used mainly by: -

- Community Councillors from their home, library or community centre;
- Residents in the community from their home, library or community centre.
- Representatives from government departments and public agencies from their work place.

1.2.1   Benefits sought

The overall success criteria reflect the needs of the Community Councils, the communities they represent and the funders of the project, from the perspectives of the Community Councillors participating in the project.

The 5 criteria and a summary of the indicators to be used are as follows:-

1. Community Councillor take-up of the e-Community Council tools.

   a. Commitment to pilot the tools

   b. Used on at least a monthly basis by 3 or more members of each Community Council

   c. Positive councillor-user satisfaction ratings

2. The impact of Community Councillor take-up on the Community Councils' activities

   a. Positive councillor-user expectations of continued future use

   b. Number of councillor-user downloads of documents

   c. Positive councillor-user ratings of ease of learning, ease of use, and impact on the Community Council's productivity.

3. Public awareness and take-up of the e-Community Council

   a. awareness among those interested in local decision-making

   b. Continued growth in 'unique visitors' over 3 months.

   c. Positive user ratings of ease of learning, ease of use, improved understanding of how the Community Council represents local views, and helping a wider range of local people to express their views to the Community Council.

4. The impact of public take-up on Community Council activities

   a. Positive user expectations that the e-Community Council will enable their Community Council to better represent the views of the community.

   b. Continued growth over three months in: -

      i. the number of consultations responses that members of the public have contributed to;

      ii. the number of items received on other matters of local concern.

   c. Majority of Councillor-users rate the e- Community Council positively in terms of: -

      i. The range of people who have expressed a view using it

      ii. The usefulness of the public responses made using it.

5. Sustainability of the e-Community Council

   a. Interest is expressed in use of e-Community Council tools by other Community Councils and community bodies.

   b. The e- Community Council capabilities have been demonstrated to other Community Councils and community bodies.

   c. Other Community Councils and community bodies are actively seeking to deploy the e- Community Council tools.

1.3. Overview

The remainder of this report has the following sections:

- Requirements Gathering: a description of the requirements data gathering process and methods.

- Requirements Analysis: an analysis of the data gathered and its implications.

- Specific User Requirements: details of the functional and non-functional requirements of an e-Community Council toolkit.

- Product Perspective: overview of operational characteristics of the e- Community Council toolkit.

2. Requirements Gathering

As background to the requirements it is necessary to consider the work and make-up of Community Councils. Further details are given in another report from this project *D2 An e-Democracy Model for Community Councils.*

Community councils have the statutory role set out in the 1973 act section 51

"*to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area, and to public authorities, the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which these authorities are responsible, and to take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable".*

The number of public bodies consulting Community Councils on their proposals has increased in the last 5 years, as has the expectation that the voluntary members of Community Councils will seek representative local opinion when coordinating their response. Local authorities are required to consult Community Councils on liquor licensing and planning application, and increasingly include them in planning improvements to local services.

Therefore the effectiveness of community councils is dependent on the Community Councillors:

- Awareness of, and ability to obtain, the opinions of the community on a variety of consultative issues that could affect the community;

- Capability to gather and respond to the views and ideas of the community to both sustain and develop the community.

2.1. Approach to requirements gathering

The general aims of the e-Community Council toolkit were outlined at the beginning of the project as to support Community Councils to engage with individuals and groups by facilitating:

- Access through a range of ICT-based devices to allow promotion of any engagement initiative at the earliest possible stage – *awareness*

- Fast, easy access to (plain English) information to support issues – *information provision*

- Informed responses from individuals and groups - *consultation*

- Deliberative dialogue with and amongst groups through interactive facilities - *dialogue*

- Feedback to individuals and groups of progress and outcomes – *information provision*

- Co-ordination of the Community Council workload.

Work Package 1 had the aim of establishing the overall user requirements for the toolkit. To address this we set ourselves 5main questions.

1. What engagement activities could the toolkit realistically support?

2. How are those activities currently carried out, by which actors and groups of citizens, and using what methods?

3. Why did these activities need to be enhanced using the toolkit?

4. What are the current technical capabilities of the Community Councils who would be using the toolkit?

5. What IT skills and infrastructure issues may affect deployment and require training or awareness-raising?

These questions have been addressed and the user requirements defined by using questionnaires, observation, semi-structured interviews and through demonstrations of successive prototype versions of the e-Community Council tools.

Further details of the responses to the above are given in the separate report '*Towards an e-democracy model for communities*'.

2.2. Summary of Requirements Gathering

This section summarises the requirements gathering activities in WP1:

2.2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaire 1 was distributed to members of the Steering Group who represented the 6 participating Community Councils. This sought an overview of the type of area and population size that the Community Council is representing and the typical internet connectivity and IT infrastructure of the area.

There were 16 questions grouped under 2 headings:- About the Community? About the Community Council?. These questions aimed to develop a picture of the current overall situation in each of the participating Community Councils. This would provide material for understanding the type of community represented by the Community Council and information regarding the baseline technical requirements.

This questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of March 2004 with a request for responses by the 17th of March 2004. All responses were received by April 19th 2004.

Questionnaire 2 was distributed to all members of the 6 participating Community Councils through their Steering Group representative. This contained detailed questions concerning the tasks carried out by the Community Councillors and sought their perceptions on the relevant importance and also difficulty of these.

There were 27 questions grouped under 6 headings:- Personal perspective on their work; Communication strategies, Responding to policy considerations and consultations, About public meetings, Internet Access, and a wish list.

This questionnaire aimed to develop a picture of community council work, providing material for understanding the type of tasks undertaken, their level of difficulty and their relevance for inclusion in the toolkit.

This questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of March 2004 with a request for responses by the 17th of March 2004. By august 2004 the response level was approximately 30%; all members of Strathfillan Community Council responded.

2.2.2 Observation

Observation of Community Council meetings March 2004: attended Strathfillan Community Council regular monthly meeting at Crianlarich to appreciate the level and type of work undertaken by each member and the need for communication between members and other communication links.

2.2.3 Interviews

Semi-Structured interviews The purpose was to support and extend information gained from the questionnaires as a means of understanding the nature of community councils and their activities.

Phase 1: In May 2004 3 members of Strathfillan Community Council, who were the Chair person, the Secretary and a member responsible for undertaking a number of consultations were interviewed.

Phase 2: In April 2005, members of Bannockburn, Cambusbarron, Torbrex, Thornhill and Blairdrummond were interviewed.

The 'guiding' questions which helped shaped these interviews were based around 4 headings. The aim was to gather more detailed information on how the Community Council reacted to consultations and other communications.

The guiding questions were:-

General: Overview of duties, activities and workload; the sub committee structure and how it works; Secretaries workload; other time commitments.

Planning consultations: How does the community council receive planning proposals? How is the community council required to publicise them? How do you collect local views? What supporting information is available? What effect can or has the community council had on the planning process? If there are objections, do these have an affect on the planning proposal?

Other consultations: What sort of material is included? How are these publicised? In what manner do the public respond? Level of incoming consultations, requests etc. How are these organised? What would make

dealing with this work load easier? Do you get feed back from the consulting body?

Communication: What is the level of contact with Stirling Council? What letter writing and lobbying activities does the community council engage in? Are there regular publicity activities? Do you need to communicate with each other quite regularly? How is this currently done?

2.2.4   Prototype demonstrations

The term 'prototype' can be used to refer to various software development approaches, but generally means that software functions and appearance are gradually improved to reflect the users' experiences, until the software satisfactorily meets some pre-defined aims. The 'prototype' may refer to a paper-based illustration of the software interface, a computer-based demonstration version with limited functions, or a fully functioning version that the developers intend to improve before finally releasing to the intended users.

An evolutionary approach has been taken to development in this project, and so the prototype has taken all of the above forms. In phase 1 (February 2004 to January 2005) there were successive demonstrations of a working online system to the project Steering Group and to Strathfillan Community Council. The prototype was then piloted with Stratfillan Community Councillors in order to get their feedback. In phase 2, feedback from other Community Councils was obtained through a series of demonstrations, and from the piloting of the phase 2 tools with each Community Council.

Prototype demonstration 1 was an initial demonstration of version 1 of the e-community council toolkit to members of the Steering Group in June 2004. Drawing on the responses to the questionnaires and observations an initial mock-up of the end-user system containing an events diary and a fictional planning consultation was used, with fictional characters, to illustrate how the toolkit could support communication activities. Comments were sought from the Steering Group, on what was desirable and feasible from their perspective.

The demonstration used a mock-up of the screens that the end user of the toolkit would be able to view and interact with.

A sample screen from the phase 1 prototype is presented here.

Figure 2.1: Screen sample of version 1.

Prototype demonstration 2 was a 'walk-through' of version 2 of the e-toolkit to members of Strathfillan Community Council at Crianlarich in July 2004. This prototype was an enhancement on version 1 based on the comments of the Steering Group and also the analysis of questionnaires and interviews.

The walkthrough used information based on the work of Strathfillan Community Council, including a questionnaire survey recently conducted by them. The walkthrough also used fictional consultations, characters and events to illustrate how the toolkit would be used.

This time the toolkit was demonstrated from both the end-user (member of the public) and Community Councillor perspectives. During the walkthrough the Councillors were asked a series of questions to ascertain what was desirable and acceptable and what changes would be needed for them to be able to use the toolkit to support their work.

The screens presented here show both Community Councillor and end-user screens.
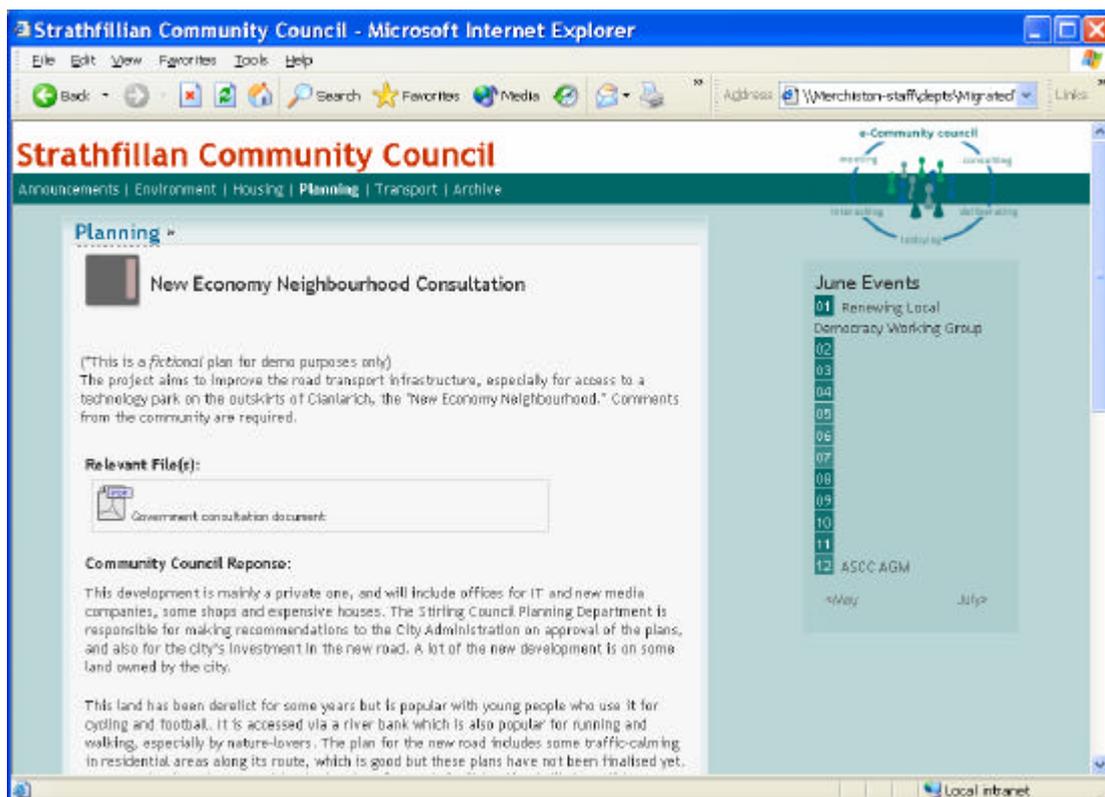
Figure 2.2 Community Councillor sample screen from version 2
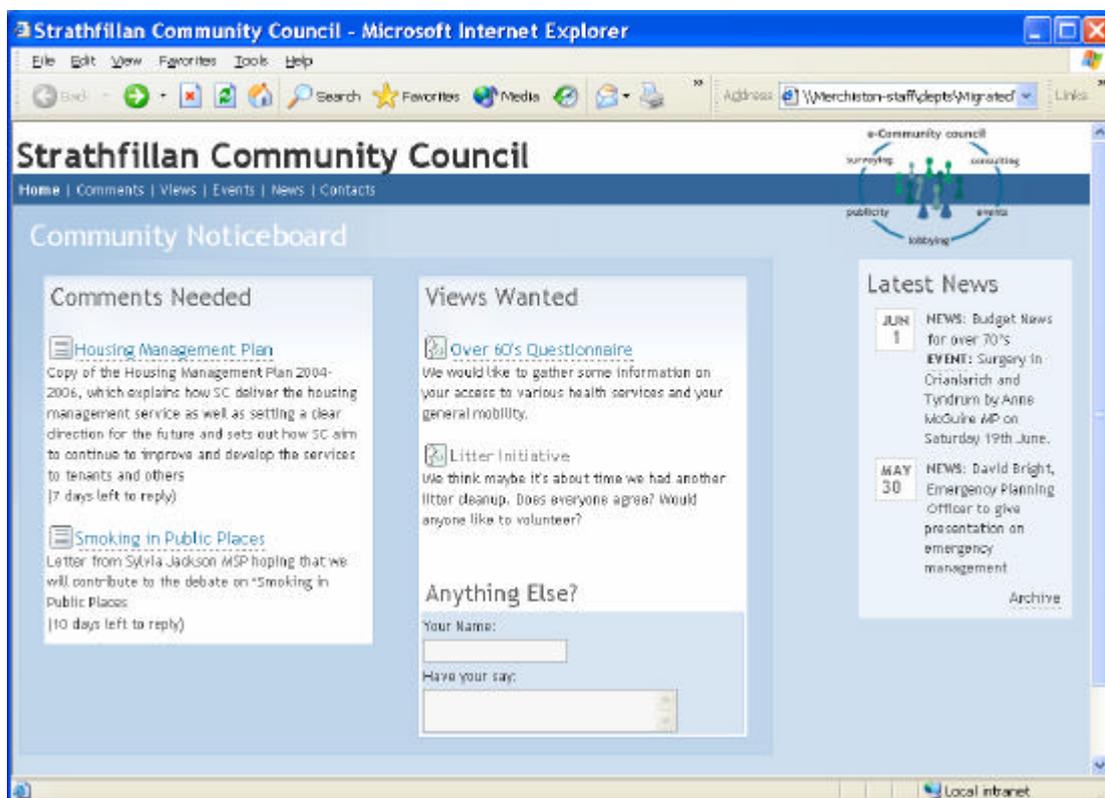
Figure 2.3: Sample screen for public access, version 2

The questions asked during the demonstration allowed the prototype to be further developed.

Phase 2 Demonstrations and Pilot followed a similar pattern, but using real examples of consultations (etc.) that were current for each of the participating Community Councils. The demonstrations with Bannockburn, Cambusbarron, Stepps, Thornhill and Blairdrummond, and Torbrex Community Councils were held between April and July 2005.

During this time the prototype web tools were also being used by their members, via a password protected site, and from April 2005 the sites were also made publicly available (a so-called 'soft launch').

The demonstrations and subsequent feedback highlighted that the support offered for collaboration between Community Councillors on consultation responses was enthusiastically welcomed and well-used. The most significant software requirements issues to emerge regarded the public interface. In particular:-

Need to list current projects and issues. Councillors wanted the public to get an overview of the current work of their Community Council in terms of current issues (community concerns recognised by the Community Council) or projects (Community Council activity to address such concerns, with a more-or-less well defined beginning and end).

The phase 1 prototype, with its focus on feeding back responses to external bodies' proposals, did not provide a ready opportunity to highlight projects or current issues emanating from the local community.

Choice and navigation. The 'Have Your Say' forum provided a means for any user (Community Councillors or not) to comment on any topic. However a visitor to the site with an interest in any particular topic (e.g. the site of a new school) could conceivably find relevant information and opportunities to comment under any of the "tab" headings (Comments, Views, Events, News or Contacts). Faced with this choice, it seemed likely that people might look under the 'wrong' tab, find nothing and leave the site.

Reconciling these two issues would mean firstly creating a means to publish information about Current Projects and/or Issues, and to add comments in response. Separate pages/ tab headings for these would however add to the 'choice' problem above.

This added complexity would need to be addressed either by providing a means to enable Community Councillors to put the appropriate links in place between related entries, or re-thinking the structure of the site to simplify it. Since there was an over-riding need for the tools to be easy to learn and to use, the latter route was taken.

A number of other issues to be addressed in the phase 2 requirements emerged from the demonstrations and from interviews about differences in working practices. The next section, Requirements Analysis, takes account of these differences.

3. Requirements Analysis

This section is concerned with analysing the information collected using the requirements gathering tools described above.

The analysis reported in this section is structured to address the following questions:

1. What engagement activities could the toolkit realistically support?

2. Why do these activities need to be enhanced using the toolkit?

3. How are those activities currently carried out, by which actors and groups of citizens, and using what methods?

4. What are the current technical capabilities of the Community Councils who would be using the toolkit?

5. What IT skills and infrastructure issues may affect deployment and require training or awareness-raising?

However, it should be noted that it is difficult to generalise about the actual activities of community councils and there is no definitive definition of their roles, activities and methods. The result is that we can only give a general description of what community councils actually do based on requirements gathered to date, and should expect to find variance in methods and roles at the level of the individual council.

Most community councillors feel they have an increasingly demanding workload.

3.1. Activities the toolkit should support & why

This section addresses questions 1 and 2 above - what engagement activities could the toolkit realistically support, and why these activities need to be enhanced using the toolkit.

Most community councillors viewed representation of the community, advocacy for the community, and being a voice for the community as their most important tasks. Many felt that keeping an interest in community affairs and being aware of them was also highly important as a community councillor task.

However, there was also consensus that communication in general was seen to be problematic, within the community council and both with the community and local authority. Communication between all stakeholders was the most commonly given response by community Councillors to the question "What is the most difficult activity?". There is a need to improve communication with the community.

The most prevalent responses to the "wish list" question were those concerned with improving communication and contact between the

community council and the community it serves. Linked to this was the desire to improve community involvement and lessen community apathy.
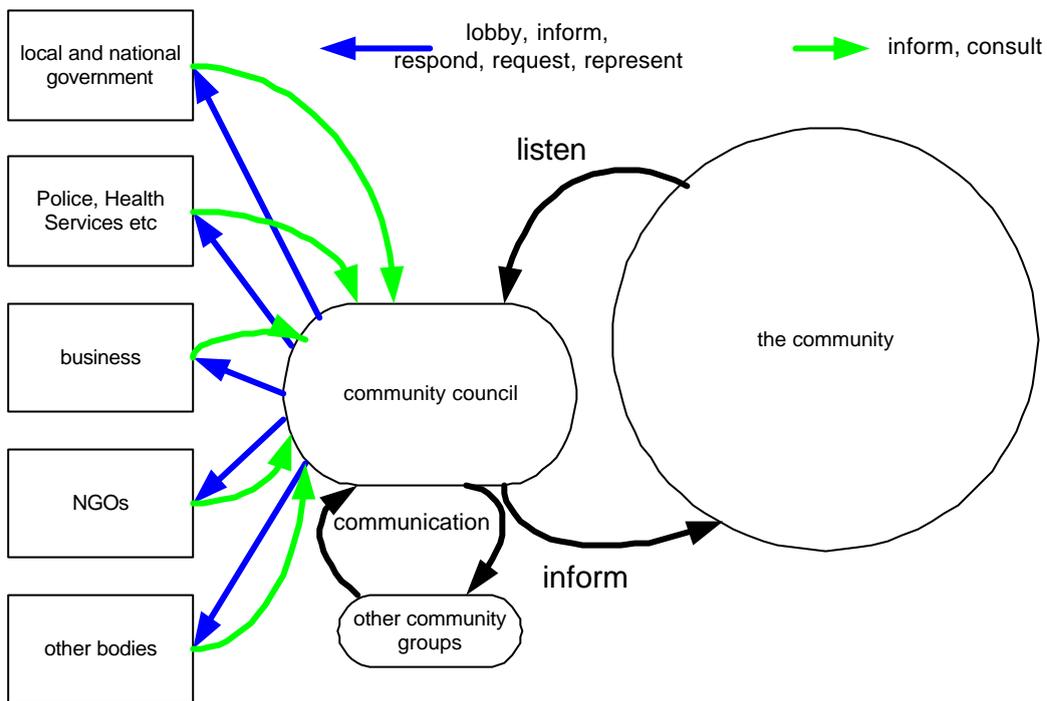
Figure 1.1: Overview of communication activities

3.1.1 Support the consultation process

The main activity, in terms of time and effort involved, is responding to consultations originating from local and national government, and other external bodies. These include policy proposals and planning applications, the latter being the most extensive and regular. There is also the need to respond to consultations from the Scottish Executive and other public agencies.

All Community Councils agree that the workload associated with consultations and planning applications is considerable and problematic. Indeed it is seen as creating a barrier to effectively conveying the views of the community back to the local authority. The problem is partly a result of the volume of paper work accompanying each consultation and partly a problem of the number of consultations and timescales involved.

The participating Community Councils feel they are currently struggling to cope and many consultations do not receive the level of attention they require. The role of the Secretary, who deals with and co-ordinates all the incoming consultations is particularly onerous.

Currently the community councils seek the opinion of the community on consultations in a limited manner, often responding themselves to a

consultation, or simply posting their response to a planning proposal (for example) then collecting any few comments there may be and submitting. There is a consensus that the consultative workload, as it is currently undertaken, does not permit more extensive consultation. Only on very contentious community issues are more extensive methods such as questionnaire or face-to-face surveys employed.

While the toolkit cannot address the issue of the volumes of paper produced by external bodies and the frequency of consultation demands, it can support the management of consultations and support the community council to respond to them more effectively.

3.1.2   Support gathering of community views

Ideas, initiatives and complaints raised by the community are communicated sporadically to the Community Council by word of mouth, telephone and letters, with e-mail being used to a lesser extent in some councils. Most councils agree that additional means of keeping in touch with the community would be beneficial. Response rates to paper-based surveys are typically low, as is turn out at public meetings.

3.1.3   Support information dissemination and communication links

Providing mechanisms to raise awareness of community council's activities and "success stories" about their achievements is one way to improve communications with the community. Typically, such achievements are not regularly publicised, and in general it was felt that the community do not pay much attention to publicity material provided by the community council.

Current communication methods used by community councils to raise awareness within the community and disseminate information vary, but commonly include a regular newsletter, a community notice board and use of the local press. The toolkit should add to these delivery mechanisms by providing an online notice board for the community, and complementing the role of a newsletter by providing timely news of meetings and other events.

There are a large number of bodies that interact with the community council, but by far the most common is the relevant local authority. Others range from Public Transport companies to (in the Stirling area) the National Park Authority. The toolkit should provide contact details for such organisations.

3.2. How activities are currently carried out

This section considers how activities to be supported by the toolkit are currently undertaken, by whom and with what resources. It is based primarily on interviews with members of the participating Community Councils.

Strathfillan Community Council in an effort to cope with the level of consultations and other work has adopted a number of sub-committees. Each

subcommittee is responsible for an issue area. The sub-committees are: Planning, Communication, Transport, E-democracy, Rural Voices, The Environment, Housing. The community council forms an ad hoc group to deal with any issues that do not fit into the remit of one of the existing sub-committees.

A formalised subcommittee structure is not typical of Community Councils however. Other approaches we found are: -

- Consultations are routed by the Secretary to certain members with broadly defined remits or areas of interest. Examples were Bannockburn and Cambusbarron.

- Consultations are received by the Secretary and may be discussed at Community Council meetings but are not routed beforehand to any member. Thornhill and Blairdrummond use this approach.

3.2.1   The consultation process

Local authority and central government consultations are very frequent, to an extent that the community councils feel they cannot respond meaningfully to all the consultations they receive. On top of this is the accumulative effect of the consultations by other bodies such as the Health boards.

Planning proposals as publicised by the local authority tended to require to be responded to within 14 days. Other local authority consultations have varying time scales, usually a number of weeks and tend to be large documents containing so much information that community councillors did not wish to actively seek out more.

Typically, the responses from a Community Council to consultations are not created consensually by all members as there is not time to do this. They tend to be provided by an individual councillor who then reports back to the Community Council on how they responded and any feedback received.

Taking the more formalised approach as used by Strathfillan Community Council, the Secretary summarises information as it arrives, and presents this at each monthly meeting. She produces a document which effectively summarises the latest incoming information, consultations and planning proposals for members to consider. This is presented to the regular meetings and items are then delegated as required. Delegation usually follows the sub-committee structure, but not exclusively. Each of the sub-committees is autonomous and can respond to consultations directly without the need to refer back to all members, although where possible and if time allows they do try and do this. They recognise the need to keep all members up to date and informed.

Cambusbarron also has a sub-committee structure, although these are named differently to Strathfillan's. More typically in the other Community Councils, the secretary routes consultations to individual members known to have some interest or expertise in the topic concerned. While individuals may

have broadly defined remits or areas of interest these do not necessarily coincide with the local government functions used in Strathfillan's sub-committee structure.

With regard to *planning applications*, the Secretary receives a weekly schedule of all such applications received by the local authority. In Strathfillan, any affecting the area are then highlighted and passed on to a Planning sub-committee member. If it is a substantial proposal then they will get a copy of the plans. Then the planning application is printed and displayed on the community notice board in each village with a note informing people where they may view the plans. The community council has 2.5 weeks to object. There is a broad range of applications, from an addition of a satellite dish to a major hotel extension. There is currently not time to publish all objections in a manner for the public to view, but the details are reported in the minutes of the relevant meeting and these are made public.

Due to the frequency and the volumes of information involved, consultations are rarely distributed to the wider community for comment. The community council takes the role of representative in this situation and responds on behalf of the community. Occasionally consultations are taken to the community to maintain a level of wider involvement. There is a feeling that the nature of most consultation documents makes them somewhat inaccessible to the broad community. The community councillors feel that their length of involvement with these consultations has furnished them with certain skills and knowledge of the context and language use, which are not normally available to the public. It was felt that providing a summary of current consultations to the public, allowing them to seek further information and involvement with those that caught their attention, would be a way forward.

3.2.2   Gathering of community views

The general picture is that members of the community visit or telephone the community councillors in order to inform them of issues they might have. There is some use of e-mail for this purpose. Community Councillors are also informed through ad-hoc encounters with other local people in the course of their everyday activities. There is also some public attendance at community council meetings where issues may come to light, but this attendance tends to be very low.

Community Councils also typically organise community projects and provide assistance to existing initiatives, and gather community views in the course of this as described further in *D2 Towards an e-Democracy Model for Communities*.

3.2.3   Information dissemination and communication methods

All the community councils use *door to door communication* as a method of community engagement with many doing so on a monthly basis. The success rating for this method tended to be 'acceptable' with only one respondent stating it was 'successful'.

Newsletters are produced on either a monthly to bi-monthly basis. This medium was generally rated as successful.

The *local press* is also used. This can be as rarely as every 6 months or as often as every month. It was generally viewed as successful.

Most respondents stated that they used a *community notice board*, usually monthly. There was a range of opinion on the usefulness of this from acceptable to successful.

The *internet and e-mail* have only recently become routinely used by some Community Councils. Those that do tend to use the medium weekly and said that it was successful or highly successful.

All community councils rely to some extent on *telephone* communication. The frequency ranges from daily to weekly and is generally considered 'acceptable'.

All community councils hold *public meetings* which are publicised a through a range of methods, including: word of mouth, newsletters, door to door leafleting, advertising in the local newspaper, publicly displayed posters, village shop or post office and the community notice board.

Community Council members receive information, typically in the form of letters and printed documents, from a very wide range of organisations. In addition to local bodies such as schools and churches there is a wide range of external organisations that themselves have a remit to engage local communities. To fulfil such demands there is often further involvement that requires members to *schedule and attend meetings*.

The local authority accounts for the majority of this 'external' communication.

3.3. Current infrastructure and technical capabilities

The table below summarises responses from the community council representatives to highlight the general characteristics of their areas and internet availability for Community Council purposes. (This information was collated prior to the involvement of Drymen Community Council).

	Strathfillan	Thornhill & Blair-Drummond	Bannock-burn	Torbrex	Cambus-barron	Stepps
Population	396	1109	7000	1575	3224	4393
Urban / rural	R	R	U	U	U	U
How distributed	Population mostly concentrated in two villages	Approx half in one village, others dispersed.	Mostly in 2 suburban villages, dispersed minority.	Suburban	One suburb, one village, some outlying farms.	One suburban village/ local authority ward
Local economy	Agriculture and tourism	Agriculture	-	Retail, financial and education	-	Industrial, retail and financial
Public internet access	1, youth hostel	1 hotel	2 library	none	1 library	1 learning centre
Where does CC meet?	Village hall	LA premises	LA premises	LA premises	LA premises	LA premises
Meeting room connectivity	none	none	telephone	none	telephone	telephone
Does CC have website?	No	No	No	No	Yes www.cambusbarron.com	Yes www.ukvillages.co.uk/stepps

Table 3.1 Community Council Connectivity

4. Specific User Requirements

In all cases, conventional media and face-to-face events will continue to be used alongside the e-community council toolkit. The toolkit will be designed to support community engagement and the work of the Community Councillors.
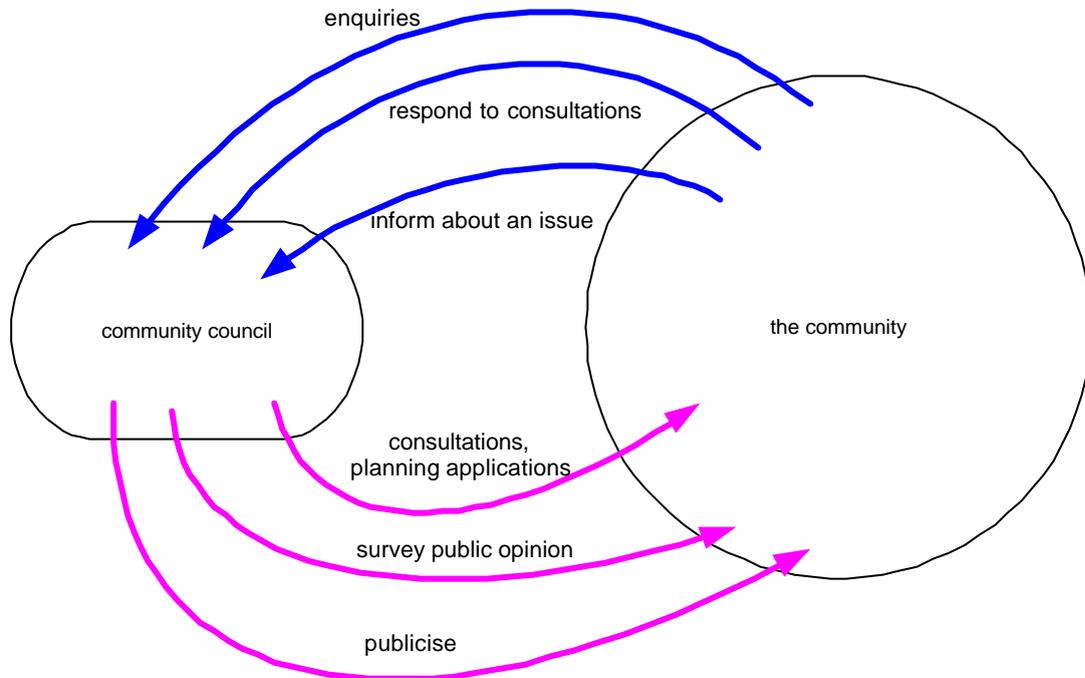
Figure 2: Community engagement

Specifically the toolkit will provide the following functionality, in the form of a website for each participating Community Council.

1. Support *the 'internal' work* of the identified Community Council by enabling: -

    a. The Secretary to publish details of the most recently received consultations, and other members to take responsibility for responding, exchange 'private' comments on them, and thereby allow them to collectively work on a draft response for public comment.

    b. Any member to add questionnaires and invite the public to respond to them.

    c. Any member to publish Items of information or opinion about consultations, questionnaires or other topics of interest to the Community Council, together with a "News and Events" diary and list of contacts.

  d. Any member to edit a list of current topics, and to categorize Items according to the list of topics.

  e. Any member to moderate Items and comments submitted by the public.

2. Support *public involvement* in the Community Council by enabling any visitor to the site to:-

  a. Read items of news and opinion about the Community Council's work

  b. Comment on any item and read other people's comments.

  c. Submit items of news and opinion, for editorial approval by a member of the Community Council.

  d. Respond to online questionnaires.

  e. Access a diary of news and events and a contacts list.

It should be assumed that the specified functionality will be provided as a managed service. This service will be provided by ITC using server software for the duration of the project.

4.1. User Characteristics

This section profiles the users in terms of their roles and likely levels of ICT experience. The users of the toolkit are categorised as *end-users* and *authorised councillors*, as follows: -

End-users may be in one or more of the following categories:-
  - Community Councillors
  - Residents in the community
  - Representatives from government departments and public agencies
  - Local authority councillors and local MSPs
  - Members of the general public.

An "A*uthorised Councillor*" means an end-user who is a member of the identified Community Council, and who has successfully logged in. Community Councillors will normally be able to access the website of their own Community Council as an "authorised councillor" and other Community Councils as an end-user.

Authorised Councillors will need to be able to easily: -

– Upload new content, in text and other formats.

– Edit existing content, in text and other formats.

– Moderate comments provided by *end-users*.

An *Authorised Councillor* performing a *Toolkit administrator* role is also assumed. The administrator's role would be to: -

− Manage user accounts, i.e. register Community Councillors as *Authorised Councillors*

− Maintain database tables.

End-users may be assumed to have no more than basic ICT skills and experience, i.e. people who would rate their 'confidence with the Internet' at less than 3 on a 5-point scale (5 being 'very confident').

Authorised Councillors should be assumed to be relatively experienced users of Internet applications, i.e. people who would rate their 'confidence with the Internet' at 3 or higher on a 5-point scale (5 being 'very confident').

Toolkit administrators should be assumed to be relatively experienced users, i.e. people who would rate their 'confidence with the Internet' at 4 or higher on a 5-point scale (5 being 'very confident').

4.2. General functional requirements

4.2.1   Community Council Setup

This task involves the *Toolkit Administrator* editing web server management software, server files and databases maintained on a server by ITC. This role will encompass:-

- Configuring and editing web server directories and domain-name mappings for the Community Council

- Creating and editing all database tables and web pages for the Community Council

- Identifying the Community Council name to be displayed

- Creating and distributing Community Councillor login identifiers and passwords to the members of that Community Council.

- Creating and editing the text of Conditions of Use

- Identifying a contact email address for the Community Council

The ITC will endeavour to provide a 'packaged' version of the server software to enable it to be run on any suitable server. This would include an installation routine to enable straightforward addition of a Community Council service for a specified domain name.

4.2.2 Councillor Registration and Logon

Straightforward registration and logon/logoff procedures will be provided. *Authorised Councillors* may login with a username and password. The *toolkit administrator* role will include registering the details of Community Councillors and distributing details of usernames and passwords accordingly.

The details to be provided for registration will comprise the following (*= optional):-
- Full name
- Postcode
- Email address
- Telephone number
- User-id
- Password
- Photograph *

There will be a facility for end-users to change their password

Passwords will be stored in encrypted form.

4.2.3 Data Requirements

For each Community Council the following classes of data will require to be stored in database records :-

Member: Identification and login details are required for each person to be identified as an *Authorised Councillor*.

Item: The purpose of the Community Council home page will be to inform end-users of current issues, projects and related consultations, questionnaires, or news and events. Typically an item will describe one or more of these in the form of text of approx 50-75 words.

Each item will have an author who may be identified either an Authorised Councillor or an end-user. If added by an end-user the Item will also have associated contact details.

Each item will be dated according to the date it was added.

An item may be indicated as 'visible to the public' or not in which case it should only be visible to an Authorised Councillor.

An item may optionally include one or more: -
- hypertext link, inserted as a URL
- email address
- file attachment

Attached file: One or more files may be attached to any item. For each file it will be necessary to record the file name and the item to which it refers.

Comment: A comment is a text record that relates to an Item, and may be added by an end-user or by an Authorised Councillor. A comment added by an end-user may be read by any other end-user, unless an Authorised Councillor.chooses to "hide" it from public view. Comments added by an Authorised Councillor may be read by other Authorised Councillors, and only by end-users if the author chooses to "make it public".

Topic: a topic is a short text description (single phrase) that may be defined and used by an Authorised Councillor to categorise an *Item*. An item may relate to several topics. Topics represent a short list of categories or keywords/phrases that may be used to help other users quickly find items relating to a current issue or Community Council activity. A topic may be "current" or "old" (if identified by an Authorised Councillor as no longer current). Each topic may have a descriptive paragraph, optionally including one or more: -
- hypertext link, inserted as a URL
- email address
- file attachment

Consultation: a consultation has a short title and a text description, similar in form to an Item. Items added subsequently may relate to the same consultation (for example to periodically encourage other users to respond). A consultation differs from an Item principally by having a duration. Authorised Councillors may define this by identifying an *expiry date* and a '*respond by*' date (normally earlier than the expiry date, to allow responses to be collated). A consultation may have one or more topics assigned to it.

Questionnaire: a questionnaire has a short title and a text description, again similar in form to an Item. A questionnaire differs from an Item by having one or more structured question-response pairs. A question may have one of the following types of response:-

- Open response: the question text relates to a response text string.

- Single option, single choice: the question text relates to 2 options with text description (typically yes/no) and the response indicates 1 of these.

- Multiple options, single choice: the question text relates to 3-5 options each with text description, and the response indicates 1 of these.

- Multiple options, multiple response: the question text relates to 3-5 options each with text description, and the response indicates 1-5 of these.

Question-responses: each question response will identify the corresponding item, question type, question text, text of each option, and text of each response.

Event: an event has a short title and a text description, again similar in form to an Item. An event differs from an Item by having an 'event date', which an Authorised Councillor may enter.

Contact: a contact is identified by an organisation name, and may optionally include a url, a contact address and postcode and one or two contact names. Each contact name may have an associated title, telephone number and email.

A normalised database table structure derived from the above is required to support the functional requirements.

4.2.4   Archiving

All Items will automatically be archived after a defined limit has been reached. The limit may be set by the *Toolkit Administrator* and take the form of:
- a specified time period, or
- a maximum number of entries.

4.2.5   Councillor Login and Authentication

Community Councillors will be assigned a login id and password, communicated to them by the Toolkit Administrator.

4.2.6   Support coordination of consultation responses

The following functions are required to support the coordination of consultation responses between Community Councillors.

Any *Authorised Community Councillor* will be able to:-

1. *Publish details* of new consultations received:

   a. Add a consultation title

   b. Add summary text, optionally embedding an arbitrary number of url's and e-mail addresses in the text.

   c. Optionally append any relevant electronic documents

   d. Define the 'official expiry date' and 'public to respond by date'

   e. Assign one or more of any current topics, in addition to a default topic "All consultations"

   f. Optionally make the consultation visible to the public

2. *View draft consultations*: any Authorised Community Councillor may view a consultation that has been added but which has not been made visible to the public.

3. *Commit to respond* to a newly published consultation, and indicate that to other Community Council members.

a. Once a user (Authorised Community Councillor) has indicated their commitment, their name will be displayed.

b. Subsequently only the identified user may edit the title, summary text and other fields.

4. *Exchange 'private' comments* with other Community Councillors, on any aspect of the Community Council response to the consultation.

a. any Authorised Community Councillor may view any comments added by any other Authorised Community Councillor

b. any Authorised Community Councillor may view any comments added by any other Authorised Community Councillor

4.2.7 Support the gathering of community views

The following functions are required to enable Community Councillors to identify current topics of interest and ask questions in relation to them, and for the public to raise matters of interest or concern. This in keeping with the characteristics of weblog tools, as described in the Introduction to this report. The e-Community Council toolkit will add to these by enabling both: -

- Open and pre-structured questions and responses
- Public and private communication

Many online surveying packages of various degree of sophistication are available, and it would not be an appropriate to develop tools similar to those that are commercially available to Community Councils at lower cost. However to be used effectively, such packages typically require specialist knowledge of survey methods. A more general need of the e-Community Council toolkit is for Community Councillors to easily integrate pre-structured questions into their online communication with constituents, to limit the effort needed to respond, and to analyse those responses.

Members of the public will expect any questionnaire-type responses they give to be treated in confidence, in so far as they are identifiable as individuals from them. On the other hand, they should also be given the option to take part in public discussion, through posting comments on items written by Community Councillors or writing such items themselves.

Any *Authorised Community Councillor* will be able to:-

1. *Add a General item*:

a. Add an Item title

b. Add summary text, optionally embedding an arbitrary number of url's and e-mail addresses in the text.

c. Optionally append any relevant electronic documents

d. Assign one or more of any current topics

e. Optionally make the Item visible to the public

2. *Add a Questionnaire item*

    a. Add an Item title

    b. Add summary text, optionally embedding an arbitrary number of url's and e-mail addresses in the text.

    c. Add one or more structured question-response pair: entering the question text, selecting the response type, and entering the response options accordingly (see previous *Data Requirements* section for specification of response types).

    d. Optionally append any relevant electronic documents

    e. Assign one or more of any current topics

    f. Optionally make the Item visible to the public

3. *View questionnaire responses*

    a. View the cumulative responses to each question in a questionnaire, including the text of each question and the response options available for it.

    b. Optionally save the cumulative responses in a comma-delimited text file format.

4. *Add an Event item*

    a. Add an Item title

    b. Add summary text, optionally embedding an arbitrary number of url's and e-mail addresses in the text.

    c. Edit an event date

    d. Optionally append any relevant electronic documents

    e. Assign one or more of any current topics

    f. Optionally make the Item visible to the public

5. *View and edit any item*

    a. Any Item and its associated fields may be viewed and edited by any Authorised Community Councillor whether or not that Item is also visible to end-users. This includes Items that have been added by end-users, whether or not the item has been approved. (Items are only likely to be edited on grounds of excessive length, erroneous or inappropriate URL links or file attachments, or breaches of the Conditions of Use).

6. *Approve General items* added by end-users

    a. An Item that has been added by an end-user will be visible to other end-users only once it has been approved by any Authorised Community Councillor.

   b. Any Authorised Community Councillor may reject an Item (for example if it contravenes Conditions of Use) in which case it will no longer be visible to end-users.

7. *Approve comments* added by end-users

   a. All Items (general, questionnaire, consultation, event) will indicate the current number of 'private' and 'public' comments added by Authorised Community Councillors and end-users respectively.

   b. Any public comment will be visible unless an Authorised Community Councillor opts to hide it from public view (for example if it contravenes Conditions of Use).

8. *Edit topics*

   a. Add a Topic title

   b. Add summary text, optionally embedding an arbitrary number of url's and e-mail addresses in the text.

   c. Optionally append any relevant electronic documents

   d. Optionally indicate whether the Topic is current

Any *end-user* will be able to:-

9. *Add a General item:*

   a. Add an Item title

   b. Add summary text, optionally embedding an arbitrary number of url's and e-mail addresses in the text.

   c. Optionally append any relevant electronic documents

   d. Assign one or more of any current topics

   e. Add contact details, which should subsequently be visible only to Authorised Community Councillors

10. *View and comment on any Item that has been made public*

   a. View the most recently added items in reverse chronological order.

   b. Optionally add a comment. The Conditions of Use will be made visible to end-users choosing this option.

11. *Respond to a questionnaire*

   a. View the questions and respond to each according to the response type defined by its author. The Conditions of Use will be made visible to end-users choosing this option.

b. Responses may be altered until the end-user chooses to submit the responses.

c. Submitted responses will not be visible to end-users.

12. *Browse archived items by month*

a. Optionally view an archive of Items older than those currently displayed by default, by selecting a month prior to the current one.

b. An archived item will be displayed whether or not the Topic assigned to it is current.

13. *Browse topics*

a. Select a topic from those currently available, and view those Items to which the topic has been assigned.

14. *Browse events in 'diary' form*

a. Select the current month and view each day showing the summary text of any corresponding events

b. Optionally view the previous or forthcoming months.

15. *Search for items*

a. Search for words or phrases in any publicly visible Item. (Note this function may use third-party search and indexing software).

4.2.8 Support information dissemination and communication links

The e-Community Council toolkit will provide a simple means for: -

- Community Council members to share contact information (a) with each other, and (b) with the public.

- Members of the public to be informed about and optionally make contact with the organisations and individuals their Community Council regards as significant.

- Members of the public to find out about the Community Council by reading appropriate information or contacting a Community Councillor privately.

Any *Authorised Community Councillor* will be able to:-

1. *Add a Contact:*

a. Add an Organisation name

b. Optionally add address details, indicating the area and postcode

c. Optionally add an 'organisation link' url

d. Optionally add a contact name, title, telephone and email

     e. Opt to make any contact name private, i.e. not visible to end-users.

2. *View and edit any contact*

     a. Any Authorised Community Councillor may edit any of the fields for any contact

3. *Edit "About your Community Council " pages*

     a. Edit summary text

     b. Edit extended summary text, optionally embedding an arbitrary number of url's and e-mail addresses in the text.

     c. Optionally append any relevant electronic documents

     d. Optionally indicate whether the text is visible to end-users

     e. Optionally edit the email address to which 'private' messages from end-users will be forwarded.

Any *end-user* will be able to:-

4. *View any contact*

     a. View contact details unless they have been identified as 'private'

5. *View "About your Community Council " pages*

     a. View summary text

     b. Optionally view extended summary text, and download any attached files.

6. *Contact the Community Council*

     a. Add text of message and submit this text. The message will not be visible to any user but will be redirected to an identified email address.

     b. Add contact details for reply

4.3. General non-functional requirements

4.3.1   Accessibility

The e-Community Council pages will be compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 1.0 available at: http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT, and will satisfy priority 1 and 2 checkpoints.

4.3.2   Usability

Under normal circumstances users will not have to wait more than 20 seconds, and on average no more than 10 seconds, for toolkit web content to load at 56kbps. Animated graphics, video and audio clips (if provided) may exceptionally take more than 20 seconds but no more than 30 seconds to download at 56kbps.

4.3.3   Data Protection

The requirement for storing and processing personal data is limited to the login details of Community Councillors, as noted in 4.2.5 above. This personal data must be secured against unauthorised disclosure, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The toolkit as defined by its functional requirements does not seek the disclosure of personal data from citizens/users apart from Community Councillors. However any user may choose to use the toolkit to publicly disclose information that may lead to them being identified. It is therefore essential that the toolkit adequately informs users of the public nature of any information they disclose, and any terms and conditions for doing so.

5. Product perspective

This section is intended to document operational characteristics of the e-Community Council toolkit. A recommended minimum specification for Community Councillor PCs is provided in the Appendix.

5.1.1 System Interfaces

The toolkit will run as a web server application.

5.1.2 User Interfaces

All user interfaces to the toolkit will be provided via industry-standard web browsers. It will be possible for a user to perform all toolkit functions using MS Internet Explorer or Netscape (version 5 or above).

5.1.3 Operating System

Server software will run on a MS Windows 2000/NT platform.

5.1.4 Interfaces with other applications

The software will use HTTP to interface with user client software.

Macromedia Shockwave Flash, Adobe PDF or other proprietary technologies requiring the user to download and install client applications will be used only where essential to the project goals.

Database integration: The toolkit will use standard database connection protocols and SQL for data storage and retrieval.

5.1.5 Availability

The toolkit should be available on a 24hr x 7 day basis.

6. Appendix - Recommended PC Specification

6.1. Hardware

We provide a minimum specification for Community Councillors, which corresponds with the lowest specification available in new PCs from major suppliers at the time of writing (July 2004), and would be sufficient for using the toolkit. The alternative specification provided bv Stirling Council may give a higher level of performance.

6.1.1   Minimum specification

Processor	P4 1Ghz or equivalent
RAM	128Mb
Video/VRAM	Any/32Mb
Hard disk	40Gb
Monitor	17 inch (desktop or tower), 12 inch (laptop)

6.1.2   Stirling Council specification

Model	Dell OptiPlex SX270
Processor	Intel Pentium 4 2.8GHz
RAM	512MB Memory
Hard Disk	40GB
	CD-ROM
Monitor	17" CRT

6.2. Software

Operating system	Windows 98 (SE) or later
	Macintosh OS 9 or later
Internet browser	Internet Explorer 5.5 or later; Netscape 7 or later, Safari 1.0 or later, Firefox 1.0 or later.
Word Processor	MS Word 98 or later, or compatible software.

Note: In addition to the above basic requirements a range of utilities (e.g. anti-virus, personal firewall) will be provided to the participating Community Councillors according to needs identified with the Project Steering Group.

6.3. Internet connection

Dial-up	56Kbps minimum
Broadband	Any