

**Are you ready to**

**discuss**



**citizenscape**

**If you want to take part in  
online conversations with  
your citizens, then you need**

# Discuss

Discuss is the very latest addition to Citizenscape. The Citizenscape platform was launched with our groundbreaking Listen release earlier in 2010.

The evolution to Discuss offers the Public Sector a whole new range of tools to engage online citizens in the democratic process.

With Listen, we made it really simple for councils to create an online civic space where you can curate all the important social media conversations that are taking place in your area.

Now with Discuss, you can begin to manage and shape these online conversations from a single location in an affordable and effective way.



What is

# Citizenscape?

**Citizenscape is a web platform designed for local authorities who want to use the social web to involve online citizens in the democratic process.**

With Citizenscape Listen, you can combine your existing social media activity with a choice of online content and conversations created by people from your local communities and drawn from a variety of sources.

The shared tag cloud gives you an immediate picture of what your community is talking

about and makes it really easy for you to listen to local online conversations.

With our new Discuss release, you can use your Citizenscape site to interact with your online citizens and make these online conversations an intrinsic part of your democratic engagement and communication activity.



# New features we are introducing with **Citizenscape Discuss** include:



## ► **Identity:**

Our new User Profile feature means your citizens can integrate Citizenscape with their mainstream social media activity. It also means that you'll know who's taking part in your online conversations and will help you get a representative view of your residents' activity.

## ► **Interactivity:**

With the Discuss release we've made it possible for your residents to post content from your Citizenscape site directly onto social media sites such as Twitter. That means that important civic conversations can grow and spread virally in a way that gives you a manageable record of comments and ideas.

## ► **Improved Functionality:**

Another new feature is the Chat / Discussion function which makes it easy for you to turn real-time Q&A sessions into online conversations that are perfectly suited to supporting community meetings or 'meet the leader' type events. You can also create a permanent democratic presence on local community websites with our travelling or embed widget functionality.

Increase civic engagement with decision-making tools like ePetitions

Integrate multimedia content like webcasts

Identify popular issues with the shared tag cloud function

The screenshot displays the Citizenscape website with several key sections:

- Ready to Discuss?**: A welcome message and a call to action to create an identity for participation.
- Map of Discussion**: A map of Brighton with various discussion points marked.
- Tag Cloud**: A collection of tags including "Digital Scrutiny", "Democracy", "ePetition", "Citizen", "Big Society", "Engagement", "Networked Society", "Identity", "21st Century", "Virtual Town Hall", "Public Sphere", "Hyperlocal", and "Open Source".
- EU ePetition**: A section for a petition titled "UK European Cyber Manager: Expectations" with 4 signatures.
- Public Webcast**: A video player showing a public user group meeting.
- Public Chat**: A chat window with a "Flag" button.
- Twitter: #bigcity2010**: A list of tweets related to the event.
- www.democracy.org**: A link to the Democratic Society blog.

Know who you are interacting with using the new Identity feature

Encourage local participation with the call to action feature

Draw interactive content from any source you choose

Join the online conversation by introducing your own content

# ► Why Discuss



## Why identity matters

One of the unique features of Citizenscape Discuss is the new User Profile, which makes it clear that you listen more closely to people who are prepared to be accountable to the democratic process.

**We do this because we believe that democracy is about accountability, and if you are asking people to participate meaningfully in local decision making then you have every right to know who they are.**

We've created this feature because social media can include a lot of anonymous noise and we think it is important to give your online citizens the opportunity to identify themselves. This doesn't mean they have to use their real names – but it does mean that you can have some certainty that

they really are your residents and have a right to take part in local decision-making processes.

Citizenscape creates a 'democratic identity' for participants which they can link to their mainstream social media accounts so that they can move seamlessly between Citizenscape and other sites.

We do however suggest that you protect their privacy – which is why we encourage the use of screen names.

This is a new and fast evolving area, but as we deepen the thinking and the technology we believe it is essential that we consider what democratic identity means in an increasingly online world.

Catherine Howe, Chief Executive Public-i



# Why Now

## Is social media socially good?

The way we communicate is changing. Social tools such as Facebook and Twitter have become embedded in our society to the point where any description of 'place' increasingly includes the social networks and blogs which are focused on that area.

This shift is reflected in the growing number of online citizens who are now creating hyperlocal communities to discuss their needs and interests.

At the same time, there is a pressure for the state to shrink and for communities to become more self-sufficient – a shift that forward-thinking councils know will require you to have more communication with your citizens, not less.

By using technology effectively, we can help you to close this gap in a proactive and innovative way that involves the efforts and interests of your citizens and enables you to curate, rather than control, the local civic conversation.

As the relationship between state and citizen continues to change, the Public Sector needs new ways of working with the public. Citizenscape has been designed to support a new way of working, and the release of Discuss marks a big step forward in the use of the social web to deliver social and democratic value.

**You will never stop engaging face to face, but digital communication is now a part of everyday life - and a vital element of your relationship with the public.**



Public-i is the leading provider of strategies and technologies for engaging people in local democracy.

We work with the Public Sector at a local level to provide cost effective and innovative products which create democratic and social value from new technologies.

We have been serving this sector for more than a decade, which means we've kept our existing clients up to speed with the very latest developments in eDemocracy and social media.

We do this by constantly developing strategies, products and services that are designed to make it as easy as possible for our clients to make the most of new technologies.

Looking forward to the next decade, our aim is to lead the market in providing affordable and effective solutions that respond to the changing needs of the Public Sector at a local level.

For more information about Public-i please either call or email us:

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## Glossary

### Social media

'Social media' refers to the many different tools people now use to interact with each other both online – in the virtual world – and offline – in the real world.

This includes:

- Emails and blogs
- Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, etc, where people connect with friends
- Twitter, where people share snippets of conversation
- LinkedIn, where professionals network online with people they want to do business with offline

One of the defining features of social media is the fact that people create the content – rather than just being broadcast to – and providers focus on using and encouraging that content.

### Twitter

Twitter is another social networking site and one of the fastest growing areas of social media. It differs from the other examples through its 'real-time' service where people talk about what is happening right now – it can also be linked to location data so you can talk about what is happening right here, as well as right now. Mobile usage of Twitter is also starting to show us the potential of phones and other devices.

### Webspace

A 'webspace' is a shared area online defined by the users as well as the host organisation, where the content may come from many different sources. Citizenscape is a webservice in which local authorities can interact with participants using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter in order to create a form of shared democratic conversation that is collaborative and reciprocal.

### Virtual world

The word 'virtual' is often used to describe content and connections which exist online – on the internet. The virtual world in this context is actually very real – people create real content and have real connections to each other which can complement and enhance their effect in the 'real' world.

### Facebook / LinkedIn

Facebook et al. are all examples of social networking sites. Users typically create an online profile of themselves and interact with friends and associates in their social network. Typical interactions include sharing photos, or posting comments to other profiles. Facebook and LinkedIn are the best-known examples but many other social networking sites exist. What is interesting is how they all differ in terms of the type of people and the nature of the conversations that you have there.

### Hyperlocal

Hyperlocal describes grass root communities which organise online while being focused on a defined geographical area. The key points are community and the link to an actual place, as well as the underlying sense of civic purpose. The 'hyper' in the local comes from the fact that these communities tend to be formed around areas which are considerably smaller than any democratic decision making unit – the exception being the parish level. There is no technological commonality across these sites - the unifying themes are location and the idea of civic purpose and community.

### Widgets

Widgets are individual pieces of online content that can function independently from each other. What this means is that rather than being a single page that needs to be managed as a whole, a Citizenscape page is made up of flexible, modular elements – widgets – which can then be quickly added to or changed to respond to your current needs. Widgets can also be used outside of the Citizenscape container – and are called travelling widgets – which means that you can have an easily maintained presence on external sites.



**Discuss  
...with us**



[www.public-i.info](http://www.public-i.info)