

Digi010

## Contribution from Antony Carpen

Hello Parliament

Antony Carpen (AKA @Puffles2010) here.

I'd like to submit my blogpost at <http://adragonsbestfriend.wordpress.com/2013/06/03/using-social-media-to-influence-policy-a-personal-case-study/> to your commission. It's an example of how a select committee crowd-sourced questions from Twitter users which enabled MPs to expose a key process in the policy making process that ministers had failed to ensure was done.

The difference was the correspondence between the committee clerks and myself as a social media user. The questions I submitted to the committee to put to ministers clearly revealed that the early risk assessments had not been carried out - or if they had, the minister was not aware of such an exercise. The committee through Twitter tipped me off as soon as the follow-up written responses from the minister came through, but prior to the publication of the final report. This gave me as a citizen another opportunity to scrutinise the work of the department concerned on behalf of an otherwise under-resourced and over-pressured committee staff.

The final report incorporated my conclusions as one of the key recommendations. Great for me because as a citizen I could see clearly how I was able to have an impact. Great for the committee staff because it meant that their workload (going through the fine details) was something that could be taken on by willing citizens bouncing off them, and great for MPs because it showed how effective use of social media has the potential to significantly increase their resource and analytical capacity at next-to-zero cost.

Effective outreach to interested and/or expert communities that might be able to help in scrutinising departments and documents is the huge area of potential. But this means having MPs and committee clerks that are trained and talented in getting the best out of social media, as well as having a reasonable level of expertise in their subject.

All the best

Antony

April 2014