



Policy, Finance and Development Committee	Tuesday, 29 March 2016	Matter for Information and Decision
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Title: Social Media Policy

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1. Introduction

This report follows on from the report that was before this committee on 27 October 2015 which gave an over view of a proposed social media policy and plan. A resolution by members to approve the proposals within that as a basis for a social media policy was deferred. The reason for the deferment was for clarification particularly on how the Council can build a twitter audience and integration with other Council social media platforms. The main objective of this report is now with the additional information (at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.6) provided, to seek approval to initiate the consultant's proposed project as detailed below.

Mark Vigil of Big Sound Marketing will be attending the meeting to provide any further explanation and a proposed plan of action for implementation.

2. Recommendations

That Members approve the proposals within the report as the basis for a social media policy.

3. Information

In 2015 at a presentation on how the increased use of social media can benefit the Council, the following were identified by members as key elements of any proposed policy:-

- Strong endorsement that social media would be an important part of external communications moving forward; and
- Emphasis on the importance the required safeguards and the need to create operational documents for staff and members on acceptable and recommended usage.

3.1. Why Social Media?

- To raise awareness for Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, allowing them to engage with the local residents whilst create a platform on which the two can communicate with each other to maximise all aspects of the Borough including safety, inclusion and community spirit.
- Create an online presence with a clear strategy, on which residents of all ages and backgrounds can communicate with the council to improve their community.
- Connect with the local people through social media, making this one of the primary tools through which to engage with, hear from and communicate any news to residents and other stakeholders.

- This can be taken forward as part of the ongoing Customer Services Transformation project.

3.2. The Council's Current Online Presence

Unlike press releases and blog posts, social media has the added bonus of updating residents as and when things happen, such as events, closures and good news. The Council's current use social media in the following ways:

- OWBC Twitter account: A successful Twitter account with 593 followers to date. The account covers mostly local news and updates within the Borough, such as car park closures and road blocks. The account also engages the online audience in Council initiatives; and
- Brocks Hill Country Park's official Facebook Page: The official page covers the surrounding area, predominantly highlighting local events. With 1,874 likes, the Facebook account is receiving a good standard of engagement.

3.3. Compatibility With Other Council Platforms

As set out in 3.2 above, there are areas of the Council or its affiliates who are already on social media so the question needs answering how integration will work across the various social media platforms. It is proposed:-

- Brocks Hill Country Park page should continue being managed as it currently is , by Brock's Hill direct;
- This gives an opportunity for the Council to share its content on its own media platform;
- The Youth Council Twitter activity should continue as it currently run
- Members of the Youth Council will not have access to the Council's Twitter account; and
- It will be at the discretion of the Council's social media users to share Youth Council content as appropriate through the Council's main pages.

3.4. Objectives for Developing Social Media

- Create a clear and precise tone of voice for the social media accounts which will reflect how the residents want their Council to be; Confident, approachable, understanding, focussed on the residents.
- Nominate a specific representative (or group of representatives) to post on behalf of the Council.
- Promote the Council and share positive news stories, upcoming events and Council initiatives.
- Focus on customer service. Engage with residents and promote a two way channel for them to contact the Council and comment on certain issues, events and opinions.
- Share content such as; news stories, photos, videos, newsletters, announcements, events etc.

3.5. Suggest Social Media Platforms

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter

3.6. Building a social media audience

A number of techniques can be employed to build a strong media audience. These will be included as part of the training of social media representatives within the Council as to how they can support audience building techniques through their own activity:-

Twitter

- A high quality profile
- Regular posting of high quality engaging content
- Engagement campaign: asking questions, encouraging retweets and interactions for example by using the right hashtags which our audience care about and a targeted following

Facebook

- Initially paid advertising can be a cost effective and targeted way of quickly building a relevant audience
- A high quality profile
- Use of appropriate hashtags (#'s) (effective to a lesser extent than Twitter but still considered worthwhile)
- Regular posting of high quality engaging content
- Engagement campaigns: asking questions, encouraging, for example, "likes" and "shares"

LinkedIn

- Promoting the page internally
- Offering LinkedIn workshops to those interested in making more of their profile and LinkedIn functionality
- Posting relevant content and encouraging Council employees to "like" and "share" this content

3.7. Safeguarding and Social Media Policies

- Social media will need to align with the existing acceptable use policy from both an IT and HR point of view.
- As one of the first steps of the social media project, the existing acceptable use policy will be reviewed to ensure it has a robust policies in place to prevent misuse and inappropriate use of social media.

3.8. Reporting and Measurement

- Central to the success of social media is regular measurement and reporting. Regular statistics to show engagement levels, audience numbers and suggested actions on how to improve moving forward will be provided.

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Implications	
Financial (MHo)	No significant financial implications known at present, which can if necessary be met through the management of change reserve
Legal (AC)	No significant implications.
Risk (AC)	CR4 - Reputational damage if misused.
Equalities (AC)	No significant implications.