

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND PROCEDURE: SIX MONTHS ON

Purpose of the Report

1. To review progress six months after the Social Media Policy was implemented at Nottinghamshire County Council and to seek approval for a further controlled expansion of social media usage.

Information and Advice

2. Policy Committee approved the Social Media Policy and Procedure on 12 December 2012. Since then, the range of social media activity across the Council has continued to show a significant increase with a number of accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and Pinterest.
3. The Council uses social media platforms to communicate and interact with residents and drive up satisfaction levels with the authority.
4. In the past six months the number of followers of the Council's main Twitter account has risen from 8,800 to over 12,200. The number of new followers is growing at approximately 90 per week. The growth has been dramatic given that two years ago the Council's Twitter following was 2,600.
5. In total, the Council has over 14,600 followers across its four approved Twitter accounts, with a weekly 'reach' (individual users who see at least one of the Council's Twitter messages) of more than 200,000.
6. While social media continues to increase, the reach of traditional print media continues to decline. That said, the reach and influence of traditional media remains significant, so a mixed model of communications is currently adopted that seeks to use both mediums in order to maximise the reach of the Council's messaging.
7. The Council's 24 Facebook pages have more than 7,200 'likes', a figure which is expected to significantly increase following the imminent launch of a dedicated page for each of its 29 Young Peoples' Centres.
8. The Council's Flickr page now hosts over 1,100 photographs showcasing recent NCC events and campaigns.

9. Pinterest, a content-sharing service that allows members to “pin” images to an online pinboard, is also in use by the Council.
10. A number of case studies, highlighting the successful way in which the Council has used social media over the past six months to inform and engage with service users, are included in **Appendix 1**.
11. The Communications and Marketing service has reviewed and audited all social media usage across the authority, and finalised arrangements to ensure the continuation of joint-use administrative access to all those accounts which continue to be managed within service areas. Retrospective risk assessments have also been undertaken for social media accounts which were in place before the approval of the Social Media Policy and Procedure.
12. While the power of social media is unquestioned, there are also considerable risks to reputation and finance as highlighted by some recent high-profile defamation cases involving prominent figures.
13. A report by the Office for National Statistics shows that nearly half of the UK’s 33 million registered internet users access social media accounts on a daily basis. The number of Twitter users in the UK has more than doubled in the past two years with an estimated 34 million accounts now being live in the UK, while more than half the UK population now has a registered account on Facebook. A more detailed analysis, including figures showing the usage within Nottinghamshire, is included in **Appendix 2**.

Next Steps

14. As social media usage continues to grow so does the expectation of Nottinghamshire residents, with response time expectations to queries being much shorter than emails or letters.
15. The ability of the Communications and Marketing function to maintain and monitor all active accounts has reached a limit where, for a consistency of approach and quality of content to continue, a widening out of controlled social media usage within service areas is required.
16. There are a number of digital tools which provide for such a delegation of responsibility, while at the same time allowing for immediate, centrally-controlled access with an ability to view and respond to all social media activity within an organisation from a single dashboard.
17. The Council’s implementation of such a tool would have the following benefits:
 - Further the Council’s strategic vision and support its priorities through the co-ordination of campaign messages and service information across all social media accounts
 - Uphold the Council’s reputation and corporate identity by implementing online monitoring and insight while ensuring a uniformity of presentation and approach

- Provide a corporate social media framework with control measures by the securing of all social media accounts through tiered access and permission-based logins
- Ensure tracking of activity and security of content and publishing by implementing a full audit trail of every post.

Other options considered

18. A number of other options have been considered including carrying on as at present but that is likely to see a slowing down of growth. Another option would be to open up access to social media accounts without control but the reputation risk to the authority was considered too high.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

19. To maintain control, consistency and co-ordination while ensuring an improved delivery of targeted service information and engagement with residents.

20. To mitigate the risk of complaints or legal challenge.

21. To safeguard the Council's reputation.

Statutory and Policy Implications

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

23. Service users will benefit from a more immediate and informed response from service areas.

Financial Implications

24. There is a cost associated with the implementation of any digital management tool. Full costings are dependent on licence agreement and numbers of user accounts, and will form part of any submitted report. It is intended that existing Communications and Marketing would be used for the purchase of the necessary licences.

Equalities Implications

25. Equalities implications have been considered as part of compiling this report. As there are no negative impacts on any protected group, an Equality Impact Assessment has not been deemed necessary.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

- 1) Notes the six-monthly report on social media and the increase in usage and engagement.
- 2) Approves the controlled expansion of social media usage within service areas through the use of appropriate digital tools as outlined in the report.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 19/08/2013)

Policy Committee is responsible for the Council's internal and external communications policy and its implementation, and is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SEM 02/09/13)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All