Nottinghamshire County Council

Social Media Strategy

1. Introduction

Social media is the term commonly given to online channels and tools which allow people to interact either with organisations or individuals – by sharing opinions, knowledge, content, common interests or asking questions.

Increasing numbers of people are using social networking and content sharing sites such as Facebook Twitter, LinkedIn, Yammer, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, blogs and forums (this is not an exhaustive list). Facebook alone has 30.3 million users in the UK (as of May 2014) and makes up nearly 96% of the online audience in the UK. These tools are gradually replacing traditional media and mass communication methods and present both opportunities and challenges for the Council.

The Council understands the need to use social media channels to stay connected to and interact with residents, customers and partners – whether as individuals, groups or organisations. Social media is therefore a key method in the Council's **Corporate Communications Strategy**.

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Council's:

- **Social Media Policy** – this informs the Social Media Strategy by ensuring that social media activity is safe, appropriate, purposeful and legal; and
- **Social Media Guidelines** - this covers the practicalities of using social media (in order to uphold the Strategy and Policy).

2. Insight

This Strategy has been informed by a comprehensive review of the Council's social media activity undertaken in November 2014. This included consideration of:

- The market – clearer segmentation to understand *who* the Council connects with and their needs
- The message – the Council's Strategic Plan (including three core values) should drive key messages so it's clear *what* needs to be communicated
- The media – having a better understanding of the range of social media tools will enable more targeted communication as such methods are *how* the Council will achieve its aims

The insight gathered has led the Council to take a more strategic approach to its use of social media. Activity will be refocused to be more aligned to Council or service strategic objectives and delivered through customer-centric tactics as part of an integrated mix of digital and offline communications channels.

3. Strategic aims

The Council uses social media for three main purposes:

- **Service delivery** - enabling and optimising social media for self-service in the channel
- **Customer service** - resolving enquiries in the channel of first contact, as appropriate linking enquiries made on social media to a customer record of all contact
- **Communications, engagement and participation** - two-way engagement and targeted messaging for key audiences in order to optimise take-up of Council services and encourage participation in the democratic process

This is in order to achieve three main strategic aims:

- Achieve **value for money and cost savings**
- Increase **positive reputation** through customer satisfaction and service take-up
- Increase **participation in the democratic process** – including using social media to gather information which will support improved service delivery

4. Objectives

The primary corporate objectives of social media activity are to achieve the objectives highlighted in the Council's Corporate Communications and Marketing Strategy 2014-18:

- **Increase customer (resident) satisfaction with the Council** - this includes:
  - Brand perception (reputation)
  - How informed people feel
  - Their perception that the Council provides good value for money
  - How able people feel they are to influence decision making
  - Customer satisfaction with enquiries handled through social media channels
- **Improve the financial position of the Council** by generating income and supporting major savings through cost avoidance – this includes:
  - Lower cost per transaction through resolving enquiries or providing supported access to digital services via social media
  - Enable take up of income generating services and savings through optimising direct service delivery through social media channels

Plus:

- **Achieve specific service, campaign and consultation objectives** - through appropriate use of social media (to be defined in service, campaign/communication and consultation plans).

5. Strategy

The following approach will be taken to social media.

Targeting

The Council will target key individuals and groups through social media, including a range of key online influencers and audiences, in order to meet its business aims.

Positioning

The Council will focus messaging and activity on 'people, place and culture' (rather than on itself as an organisation). It will genuinely engage with customers through social media, actively promote the County and support the online Nottinghamshire community.

Key messages

- We are in touch with and support local people and communities
- We listen and talk honestly and openly online
- We recognise that social media is the channel of choice for many - for customer service, talking to us, receiving information from us and for accessing our services. We support this choice and optimise our service delivery appropriately.
- Social media is about listening as much as talking - without infringing privacy and with respect for personal and organisational boundaries as well as platform etiquette we will actively listen as well as engage with appropriate online communities and influencers.

Tone

Overall this is friendly and professional. A range of tones will be taken depending on the nature of bespoke messages.

6. Tactics

The following social media tactics will be used:

Content

It's not about the technology but the online experience – there needs to be a reason to engage so content is key. The key to successful social media is content which means people repeat visit and engage.

There will be a focus on 'showing' rather than 'telling' and as part of this multimedia content (images and video as well as text) will be actively considered.

Social media content will be both planned and scheduled, as well as reactive. This is to ensure a balance of different types of content whether this is promotional, engaging, questions/feedback, educational, inspirational or supportive in nature.

Channels

We will use social media channels appropriate to our objectives and in which customers choose to engage. This might include but is not limited to: Facebook Twitter, LinkedIn, Yammer, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, blogs and forums.

As a rough guide (as channels will change over time and in accordance with the preferences of target audiences), the following social media channels are currently likely to be most suitable for the following groups:

Children and young people	Snapchat, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, Vine, YouTube and Twitter
Adults and families	Facebook, Twitter LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Vine, Flickr and Pinterest
Older people	Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
Businesses	Twitter, LinkedIn Facebook, YouTube, Vine
Visitors	Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter & Pinterest

Social media channels can take the form of being 'owned' by the Council, 'earned' (i.e. third parties who republish Council content) or 'paid for' (e.g. advertising on social media channels).

The right mix of channels to reach the right audience at the right time with the right message, will be determined by a targeted, audience focussed approach.

Hashtag

Use of hashtags will be used when relevant as part of key communications campaigns to help build and be an easy reference point for audiences.

Customer journeys

Social media will be used to support customers to complete online (and offline) journeys that meet their needs – whether this is towards completing a call to action, finding information or accessing a service. This will be done in an integrated way, so social media is promoted through other digital and offline channels.

7. Implementation

A phased approach will be taken to implementing this Strategy as follows (please note some of these stages will run concurrently):

Phase	Brief details	Timescale
Rationalisation and basic housekeeping – of existing social media counts	Delete old/unnecessary profiles Ensure appropriate branding Ensure digital team has access	End of October 2015
Implement content strategy across corporate social media accounts	Ensure content/publishing schedule is in place	End of November 2015
Communication of basic standards	Proactively communicate and promote the Social Media Policy and Social Media Guidelines	End of December 2015
Implementation of standards (for profiles not already meeting them)	Address with individual services as needed	End of January 2015
Support, empower and enable	Identify social media ambassadors Provide bespoke training to relevant individuals/services Establish digital elearning module for all staff to include social media standards	End of March 2015

In addition, ongoing promotion and review/evaluation of social media profiles and activity will take place to maximise information and engagement with online communities.

8. Monitoring, measurement and evaluation

A social media monitoring system/s will be used to manage Council profiles and accounts on social media channels. This will also enable proactive gathering of data to help meet customer needs and achieve Council aims. A range of external social media measurement tools will also be used to gather a range of quantitative and qualitative data.

The impact of activity and overall return on investment will be measured against the primary corporate objectives for social media outlined in section 4 above.

Specific KPIs will be set for specific objectives defined in relevant service or communication plans. Social media monitoring is likely to include, but is not limited to metrics such as:

- Volume
- Engagement
- Share of voice
- Influence
- Awareness
- Traffic
- Click throughs
- Conversion (completing a call to action, making a sale)

- User journey
- Customer satisfaction
- Customer service

9. Interdependencies

This Strategy supports and takes account of the following:

- Corporate Communications and Marketing Strategy and relevant policies/procedures, including:
    - Social Media Policy and Social Media Guidelines
    - Digital First ethos and standards for content, design and technology
- ICT Strategy and relevant policies/procedures, including:
    - IT security
    - Internet and Email Use Policy
- Customer Access Strategy and relevant HR policies/procedures, including:
    - Employee Code of Conduct