

BRIEFING NOTE

Social Media Strategy



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What is the social media strategy?

As you will have seen, the Social Media Strategy provides the correct framework, structure and safeguarding of our online presence. It will help to:

- ✓ Strengthen, promote and protect the Council's reputation.
- ✓ Encourage and nurture engagement on platforms which our residents are actively utilising.
- ✓ Increase website traffic by incorporating website links in social media content.
- ✓ Equip staff with on-going training to help reduce online reputational risk.
- ✓ Move forward with innovative social media projects once fundamentals (tone of voice, managing engagements and target audiences) set out in the strategy are in place.

Strategic social media will allow the Council to *"have in place methods of communication that enables customers to provide and receive information"* as showcased in the Corporate Plan.

Why the strategy is needed:

Currently, anyone with access to a Council social media account can speak on behalf of the Council. This strategy will establish a clear line of authority including the authorisation of key messages by the Communications Team and departmental heads.

The Social Media Strategy will help manage reputational risk by providing solutions such as:

- Managing negative engagement.
- The administration of departmental pages and page admins.
- How and when to interact with residents.
- Managing the set-up of new accounts.
- A consistent tone of voice.
- Speaking as the page – NOT as a member of staff.
- Using feedback from residents to drive engagement.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Communications Team and the departments.

Timeframes and who is strategy for?

Due to the fast-paced nature of social media, this strategy will be updated annually. The Communications Strategy will refer to the Social Media Strategy as a clear and concise document for any member of staff managing a social media account to pick up and easily follow.

The risks of not implementing:

Most local authorities have clear guidelines for staff to follow about how to effectively communicate with residents using social media. Without the implementation of a strategy, we will be exposed to the continuous threat of staff feeling they can speak on behalf of the Council, messages being put out on social media without being checked or authorised and not being aligned to the tone of voice and core values of the Corporate Plan and the Council.

Recommendations and how we need to move forward:

It is imperative that this Social Media Strategy is approved so that from the January 2020, implementation will allow the Communications Team to:

- Be an admin (super-user) for all SDDC social media accounts (this has already been actioned). This is essential as it ensures one point of control and security.
- Audit our social media accounts – identify strengths and gaps.
- Create a distribution list of everyone who owns a departmental Facebook/Twitter account for targeted crisis communication.
- Provide tiered training modules to establish solid foundations of how and why to correctly use social media when communicating with thousands of residents.
- Create an evolving training guide based on up-to-date research and best practise.
- Continue to evaluate and report on a monthly/seasonal basis to help inform decision-making across departments/services.
- Develop the Evidence Base and Action Plan with clear objectives and measurables.
- Continue to keep the Senior Leadership Team updated with any essential social media actions.

A few words from the Local Government Association:

“There are more risks with NOT having a Social Media Strategy.” Local Government Association (LGComms) The Public Service Communications Academy 2018.