

INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

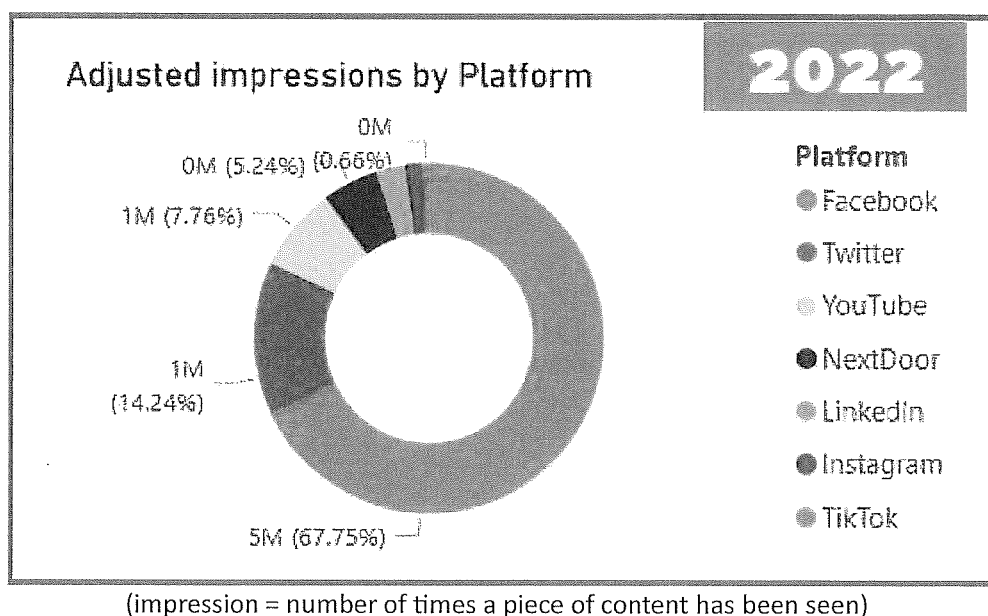
Report for Policy & Resources Committee Meeting on 7th June 2023

Introduction

The introduction of social media would enable the Town Council to improve the way it communicates with the community and would allow the Town Council to share and publicise its work, news, services and achievements.

Which Social Media Platform?

The Deputy Town Clerk and Senior Operations Support Officer attended a social media webinar in March delivered by the Communications Team at Wokingham Borough Council. The webinar demonstrated that Facebook remains WBC's most popular platform, as demonstrated in the infographic below, and therefore Facebook seems the most sensible starting point for ETC. Starting with one platform will allow officers to focus on building up a following and improving engagement.



Social Media Policy

A Social Media Policy has been drafted for approval.

Who Will Be Responsible?

Social media will be monitored by delegated trained officers and only officers who the Town Clerk has expressly given permission to will be allowed to post on the Council's social media. Initially, this officer will be the Senior Operations Support Officer, with a plan to train the Committees Officer to monitor the account in their absence.

Councillors must not act or respond on behalf of the Council or the Council staff and must ensure that their posts represent only their role as an individual councillor.

What Will ETC Post?

Earley Town Council will use Social Media to:

- Publicise ETC's news and events
- Share notices of council meetings
- Publicise the hard work of our officers which may otherwise go unnoticed e.g. cemetery working parties, sports pitch preparation, works at MELNR
- Update residents on issues and what we are doing to resolve them e.g. fallen branches
- Promote our assets
- Share photos of our assets e.g. our open spaces, the wildlife they attract etc.
- Share different activities, events or campaigns happening in the community
- Share information relevant to our residents

How Will We Monitor Social Media?

Social media will only be monitored during office hours. As officers have multiple responsibilities, it would be unrealistic for them to monitor social media constantly throughout the day however they would aim to address any comments or queries made in a timely manner.

Acceptable Use / Site Rules

A list of site rules setting out acceptable behaviour for people interacting with our social media can be found in the Social Media Policy.

Report prepared by: Jess Friend (Senior Operations Support Officer)



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The use of social media enables the Town Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website, Facebook and Twitter and over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

The Council's social media intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Town and promote our community positively.

This policy sets out how social media will be used, the standards which must be upheld when using social media and the action that will be taken if there is a breach of this policy.

Scope

All staff and councillors are expected to comply with this policy and must protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council, its services, employees, stakeholders and community. Any breach of this policy will be treated as gross misconduct.

Principles

To publish and promote information about the work and services of Earley Town Council to a wider audience and provide community information.

Responsibility

The Town Clerk has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy. All staff and Councillors are responsible for ensuring that they comply with this policy.

The Council's social media will be monitored by delegated trained officers. Only officers who the Town Clerk has expressly given permission to will be allowed to post on the Council's social media.

Councillors must not act or respond on behalf of the Council or the Council staff and must ensure that their posts represent only their role as an individual councillor.

How we will use social media

We will use social media to:

- Publicise our news, events and decisions
- Support campaigns and initiatives that are in line with the Town Council's priorities
- Repeat information from trusted sources which is of use to residents
- Provide information about service changes and any disruptions
- Enhance the reputation of the local authority and local democracy

We will not use social media to:

- Engage in personal conversations
- Debate our decisions and policies
- Provide an emergency or out-of-hours response
- Support any specific political view or party
- Provide an alternative route for enquiries, questions or complaints that should be directed our main communication channels

Content

The Town Council is responsible for using social media appropriately and must be mindful of the legal implications of inappropriate use, in particular, when posting content, the team will be mindful of:

- defamation (ie libel)
- copyright
- discrimination and victimisation
- contract
- human rights
- protection from harassment
- criminal law and the administration of justice
- data protection
- breaches of confidence

Times of monitoring

The Council's social media is not monitored 24/7 and delegated officers will not be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, they will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful information are passed to relevant people or organisations.

Sending messages/posts via social media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council is not obliged to monitor or respond to request for services or information through social media channels. Such requests should still be directed directly to the Council Offices.

We may on occasions direct those contacting us to our website to see required information.

Acceptable use / site rules for members of the public interacting with our social media

We require that all those commenting on our social media channels:

- Are civil and polite
- Avoid posting any message that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or otherwise offensive
- Are not abusive about any individual, including council staff and elected councillors
- Avoid posting content copied from elsewhere for which they do not own the copyright
- Do not discriminate against certain parts of our communities
- Do not post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once
- Do not post comments or questions that are not relevant to the original post
- Do not publicise their, or anyone else's, personal information, e.g. contact details
- Do not advertise products or services

- Do not impersonate someone else
- Do not post spam or post off-topic content (persistent negative and/or abusive posts in which the aim is to provoke a response)
- Do not seek to promote the views or opinions of a particular political party

We will remove, in whole or in part, posts that we feel contravene these rules. The Council may choose to issue 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed' statement. Anybody repeatedly contravening them will be blocked and/or reported to the associated social media platform or other authority. We will not tolerate or respond to abusive messages.

We will remain politically neutral at all times on social media which is why council officers are unable to reply to, endorse or engage with, any content that is of a party-political nature.

Breach of this policy

Any reports of a breach of this policy by officers or councillors will be fully investigated by the Town Clerk and could amount to gross misconduct.

The below list identifies what is classed as a breach (this list is not exhaustive): -

- Disclosure of personal, confidential or private information about the Council, staff or others.
- Posting content which is abusive, obscene, discriminatory, criminal or that may cause embarrassment to the Council, staff, Councillors or customers.
- Posting a statement which could cause criminal or civil liability to the Council or yourself.
- Posting material which is in breach of copyright laws.
- Posting pornographic or obscene material such as photos, pictures, writing, films or video clips.

Don't post online what you wouldn't say in person. If in doubt, don't post.

Date of policy: May 2023

Policy effective from:

Date for next review: