



Committee

Audit Committee
6 February 2025

Item

Public



Social Media Management Update

Responsible Officer:

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):

Cllr Lezley Picton, Leader and cabinet member responsible for communications

1. Synopsis

This report provides Committee an update on the progress against recommendations following an audit review of the council's social media presence to ensure accounts are as effective as possible and properly managed by services.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. For several years social media has played an important role in the Council's mix of communication channels and in communicating directly with many people in Shropshire as media consumption patterns continue to evolve as technology and digital accessibility increases. A range of council services operate social media accounts across several different platforms. Most accounts are operated by services with little direct corporate involvement or oversight of their content or management, with services given social media guidelines to follow to ensure corporate standards are met. Several corporate accounts are managed by the Council's corporate communications team covering Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), NextDoor, Instagram and LinkedIn. These accounts tend to be those with the highest number of followers among council accounts. As with all accounts, these can be effective tools to share council information and foster engagement. They can also attract significant levels of public interaction. Requests for new social media accounts by services are considered by the Corporate Communications team first before proceeding.

- 2.2. Currently, the council has 45 Facebook accounts, 34 X accounts, 12 Instagram accounts, 6 LinkedIn accounts and 1 Nextdoor account. There are 80 users who have access to Orlo (see 2.4 below) to manage these accounts.
- 2.3. The platforms the council uses reflect broader UK social media consumption, with the Council using five of the seven most commonly-used platforms in the UK (OFCOM Online Nation Nov 2024). An exception is the use of NextDoor, which latest data shows around 25% of Shropshire households are registered for and allows for hyperlocal targeting of information and content to specific areas.
- 2.4. Access to social media should be through a corporate social media management platform (Orlo) which helps to manage posting and replies and gives an auditable trail of activity, while also providing tools to help analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of social media activity.
- 2.5. An audit of the Council's social media presence was undertaken between June and September 2024. This resulted in several recommendations and overall assurance rating of unsatisfactory.
- 2.6. This report provides information on the action taken by Corporate Communications in response to the recommendations.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Members note the updates as set out in the report and endorse the responsibility on services to adhere to social guidelines and policies

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. This is an information report providing the Committee with details of the work undertaken by Corporate Communications in response to the Audit and therefore a risk assessment and opportunities appraisal has not been carried out

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council is currently managing an unprecedented financial position as budgeted for with the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 29 February 2024 and detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. This demonstrates that significant management action is required to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all Cabinet Reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
 - scaling down initiatives,

- changing the scope,
- delaying implementation, or
- extending delivery timescales.

- 5.2. Following the audit, there is scope to review some of the tools that the Council uses to support its social media activity and seek to drive out cost reductions. This could be through a variety of means including:
- 5.2.1. Reducing the number of social media accounts and users, subsequently resulting in potential licence cost reductions. This may also release staff resource as fewer accounts are operated, although this may be difficult to quantify accurately.
- 5.2.2. A procurement review to ensure best value is being achieved. The contract for the council's social media management platform is due for renewal in June 2025 and discussions have begun with potential providers
- 5.3. Effective use of social media can play an important part in helping to drive behaviour change, adoption of service changes and transformation and where appropriate may help to achieve savings or increase income.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. There are no anticipated direct climate change or environmental impacts associated with the recommendations in this report.

7. Audit recommendations

- 7.1. The Audit report follows a report in 2017/18 which gave a limited assurance rating. The latest report gives an unsatisfactory rating and identifies six significant risks and one measure that requires attention. It makes several recommendations which are identified at Appendix 2 of the report.
- 7.2. The table below updates members on the progress against these.

| Recommendation | Management action | Review date |
|---|---|---|
| Intranet pages and "Terms of Use" documents to be updated to clarify the current responsibilities. | Intranet pages and terms of use updated and communication issued to all services operating social media accounts. | As part of regular reporting cycle to EMT |
| Monitoring of social media accounts and activity to ensure compliance with the Terms of Use and highlighting of non-compliance. | This is now being conducted and regular reporting to EMT prepared. Following a first stage review, 26 social media accounts and users have now been deleted and the number of management platform licences has reduced. This will continue. | Quarterly reporting to EMT |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Administration of social media accounts should ensure compliance with the Terms of Use. | Further communication with social media account holders and a freeze on creation of new social media accounts. Any new users are given training and briefed on the Terms of Use. Restructure in Communications team to create a role with specific responsibility for overseeing compliance. | June 2025 |
| Compliance should then be monitored and reported on. Consideration to reinstate training for all users to ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities. | Regular reporting template created and circulated for feedback. Training requirements, including existing users will be reviewed once Communications restructure is completed. | April 2025 |
| Staff who no longer work at the Council, should have access to any social media account removed. | This now being built into the leaver's checklist for managers as part of a wider review of this with HR. Where staff have left who had access to a social media account, services have been asked to review access and make any necessary changes. | Review six monthly |
| A value for money assessment should be performed on the use of Orlo. Following this, if usage is continued training should be provided to all users to ensure all aspects are fully utilised, including analytics and insights. | A revised scope for a social media management platform is being created and initial discussions have begun with potential suppliers, ahead of the expiry of the current management platform contract in June 2025. This will be done alongside a rationalisation of accounts and users to ensure channels are used effectively and value for money. | Appoint to a new contract/provider July 2025 |
| Monitoring of activity using analytics and insights to inform future content and posting by Service Areas. Cross council monitoring by the Communications Team should be presented to Senior Management on a regular basis to improve social media outcomes. | This recommendation creates an additional task for the Communications Team, and this will be reviewed as part of the wider Communications Strategy review to ensure that the team's limited capacity is focused on the right priorities. | Review once Communications Strategy and Communications Team restructure is complete – May 2025 |

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. As part of the Council's resizing, the Communications Team is undergoing a restructure which will reduce the team's staffing budget by the equivalent of three FTEs. This is expected to complete by April 2025. This will create further pressures, in addition to the tasks recommended following this Audit. As the report highlights, capacity and other more urgent priorities may also restrict the Communications Team's ability to fully respond to all recommendations of the Audit report.
- 8.2. The Communications Team took on responsibility for social media from Digital Services in March 2024 and contract renewal negotiations with Orlo quickly followed. No additional resource was transferred to the Communications Team for this and has had to be absorbed into other business as usual. However, the Communications restructure that will take place shortly seeks to create a new post which would have clearer responsibility for the oversight of a range of digital tools and channels, including social media.
- 8.3. The wider council resizing programme is also likely to impact on the number of services' ability and resource available to operate service-led social media accounts. This may lead to a further reduction in the numbers of accounts and services seeking greater reliance on the accounts managed by Corporate Communications, which would make compliance and oversight of this activity much simpler.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. Several measures are already underway to address issues raised by the audit. Further changes planned as part of a restructure of the Communications team, while subject to consultation, should support this further.
- 9.2. A more consistent approach and rationalisation of social media accounts will create opportunities for better value and governance of the council's social media presence

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Internal Audit Report Social Media 2024/25

OFCOM [Online Nation November 2024](#)

Local Member: N/A

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Final Audit Report Social Media 2024/25