

Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel

**Agenda
Item No.**

27 October 2011

7

Update on Social Media and Web Developments Report

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council
 Councillor Towe, Finance & Personnel
 Councillor Arif,

Executive Summary:

To update Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Panel on progress made by the communications unit in the past 12-months.

Reason for scrutiny:

To review activity and developments across both social media and the council web site.

Recommendation:

Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Panel is asked to consider the progress made by the Communications Service over the last year and to review the proposed items and activity in the 'what next' section.

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27 October 2011

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1. Social Media

1.1 Highlights from the past 12 months

- Walsall's **Twitter** feed has now attracted **3,927** followers, making Walsall one of the **top 10** most followed local authorities with almost **10,000** 'tweets' sent out since the feed was launched. A number of positive case studies exist that underline the value of this new media channel
- We now have **16** separate Twitter accounts. Nine for service areas and six for staff representing service areas
- We have been approached by over **20** organisations with requests for help and advice on social media use, including the Home Office, WaterAid and several local authorities
- Our #walsall24 campaign in March 2011 won a national LGComms Gold award
- We now have **10** separate Facebook accounts
- Walsall's main Facebook fan page is the largest in the Black Country with more than **725** people who 'like' it. Since rolled this approach out to other service areas, with support, at **£zero** cost
- We now have four Flickr accounts which hosts photography
- Strong links built with the borough's Flickr group facilitating photographic events and using images with permission on the council website – this has been highlighted as best practice by blogs around US government as well as by UK bloggers and Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA)
- Communications have worked with regeneration's town centre team to transform the empty Tesco shop window into a showcase of town centre information and images from the Walsall Flickr group who are a group of more than 130 amateur photographers who live in and around Walsall
- Communications have arranged a Flickr meet at the Mayor's Parlour where amateur photographers from the Walsall Flickr group took, published and shared with the council more than 100 photographs.
- Twitter used to keep residents informed when gritters are despatched in icy conditions helping to reduce avoidable contact with officers and calls centres at **£zero** additional cost. Highlighted by Local Government Improvement and Development as well as Microsoft and SOCITM
- Communications have worked with neighbourhood managers to produce a Closer ties have been built between Walsall Council and West Midlands Police in the wake of disorder in the summer
- We have staged basic training for elected members (10 attended)
- We have spoken at national events on our use of social media and have once again helped to arrange the Hyperlocal Govcamp event which is one of the largest outside of London
- Selected by The Guardian as the only council to pilot the Noticeboard social geolocation news start-up

1.2 What next?

There's no shortage of ideas but the team are now at the point where is no extra capacity.

We are looking very closely at our work demands and where we need to go in order to give customers what they want – to help us understand this better we are going to conduct some research to ask residents and customers:

- What information they want from the council
- How they prefer to receive it (e.g. which channels)
- When they want to receive it

Other potential activity for consideration includes:

- Opening up social media to all staff and elected members (and within current web usage protocols)
- Organising social media surgeries for elected members.
- Expanding training for officers.
- Creating support network for staff using social media.
- Installing Wifi in the council chamber
- Live streaming of council meetings
- Expand meeting tweeting from Full Council to cabinet and expand scrutiny social media as a tool of community engagement (e.g. Icelandic constitution)
- Finally, we are working with other West Midlands councils to look at more regional opportunities for joint working across social media (e.g. a real time gridding map of the region)

2.0 Council Web Site

2.1 Highlights

- Launched new web site homepage in August 2011 (delivered in-house, at £0 spend)



- New homepage is designed to increase online transactional activity (to make services easier for residents to access and to reduce costs)
- Refreshed What's on Walsall is now live. Training has been delivered and partners/services are now contributing to the service which promotes a wide range of events and activities across Walsall to our residents

2.2 What Next

- Ongoing improvements are being made daily, through close working between the web team, ICT and Print & Design (in-house, at £0)
- Potential options appraisal of new content management system (both open source/free and paid for option)
- Review of intranet and development of improved staff portal (in order to access information and forms 'right, fast and simple')

3. Resource and legal considerations:

There are no legal considerations associated with this report.

4. Citizen impact:

Residents are able to more readily access information about council services, events and other data as a part of the enhanced number of channels being utilised and through ongoing web developments.

5. Environmental impact:

N/A

6. Performance management:

There are no significant performance management considerations associated with this report.

7. Equality Implications:

N/A.

8. Consultation:

Social media by its very nature is a two-way/listening channel and opportunity and we use it to engage with our customers.

A web survey informed changes to the current web site and a user forum of local residents was set up to increase this consultation further.

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