

Overview and Scrutiny Board 30th May 2012

Social Media

Recommendations

- 1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider the report and comment on the progress being made on the use of social media by Warwickshire County Council.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 The update to Overview and Scrutiny Board will include an overview of the use of an innovative new communications channel and how that can most effectively be used within local authorities to help engage with local communities.
- 1.2 The report attached at Appendix A provides an overview of the benefits of social media, in addition to an outline of the following seven case studies that were undertaken:
 - Warwickshire Museum: Oisin the Deer (Twitter)
 - WCC Communications: Online news audio clips (AudioBoo)
 - County Arts Services: Creative Warwickshire (Flickr)
 - Warwickshire Library and Information Service: News and events (Twitter)
 - WCC Schools: Education news (Twitter)
 - Warwickshire Direct: Information and customer service (Twitter)
 - Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (Twitter)

Appendices

Appendix A – Social Media Case Studies

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Warwickshire County Council Communications
Social Media Case Studies

Introduction

Social media has huge potential to help local authorities to share information instantly and more widely, and to engage traditionally hard-to-reach audiences. The new platforms present opportunities for 'conversation' with citizens who would not normally attend public meetings or take part in formal paper or online surveys. The use of social media allows councils to interact with more local residents, and to counter perceptions that local government is overly bureaucratic and remote.

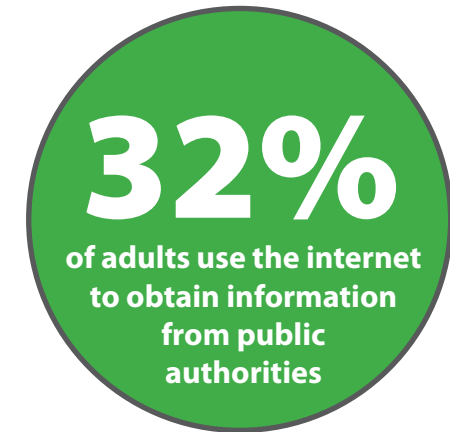
Against the backdrop of unprecedented budget cuts WCC is piloting the use of social media to move customers to more cost effective channels to make savings whilst also improving the experience of the customer.

Research by The Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) on customer service interactions list web transaction costs at 27p on average, compared with phone transactions of £3.22 and face-to-face transactions of £6.56. If we can shift more business online we will save money.

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) established a Social Media Board (SMB) in 2011 to guide colleagues in their use and set standards - via a set of policies and protocols - to ensure

appropriate, quality output. The SMB approved a total of 29 pilot projects to test these arrangements and learn more about how social media might promote the council's work and enhance its reputation with the wider public.

The following case studies describe seven of those projects, which were reviewed in 2011.



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Social media in brief

Used effectively, these media can be an excellent way to start a conversation with our target audiences by informing, connecting, and attracting them to our services.

Social media is much more than a teenage obsession. Usage is not confined to the under-30s, but increasingly mainstream. Snapshot research published in September 2011* suggested more than half of all over-65s were using Facebook regularly, and concluded that use of social media was 'endemic' across UK society.

Five of the WCC case study pilots used Twitter, one AudioBoo, and one Flickr. These are briefly described, along with Facebook, below:

75%

of UK adults use the internet - equivalent to **324,825** adults in Warwickshire

200,000

people visit the Warwickshire Direct website each month

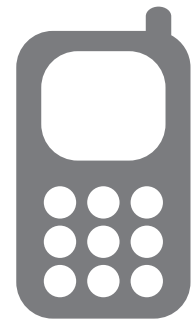


39%

of people over 65 use the internet - that's around **42,000** over 65 year olds in Warwickshire

27%

of mobile phones are used to access the internet - that's roughly **105,000** mobile phone users in Warwickshire



twitter

Twitter is an online social networking service enabling users to send and read short, text-based posts known as 'tweets'.

audioBoo

AudioBoo is a mobile and web platform for sharing audio clips.

flickr

Flickr is an image and video hosting site that allows users to upload and share photos and clips.

facebook

Facebook is a social networking utility that allows registered, 'profiled' users to exchange messages with 'friends' or to join common interest user-groups.

* Research published by PR and social media specialists umpf based on a sample of 2,387 UK adults surveyed by polling agency You Say Pays in July 2011.



Case study 1 Warwickshire Museum: Oisín the Deer

@oisinthedeer

Warwickshire Museum set up a Twitter account as Oisín the Deer. The cartoon-style character, whose name - which means 'young deer' in Gaelic - was chosen by a public vote, represents an extinct giant deer from Ireland whose skeleton is on display in the Market Hall Museum, Warwick.

Aims

To create a social media presence for WCC's museum services to help them attract new users and reach target audiences.

Operation

The Keeper of Geology has overall responsibility for the Twitter account which is administered by museum web managers. Museum service staff are encouraged to suggest subjects for tweets. Oisín has been used to promote the museum's work by sharing information on activities, events, collections, exhibitions, and what goes on 'behind the scenes'.

Interaction

To encourage dialogue, the museum service regularly posts photographs of mystery



objects on Twitter, inviting tweets guessing what they might be. Oisín reveals answers a week later. Warwickshire Museum also took part in 'Ask a Curator' day, answering tweets about the collections. Interaction is further encouraged by asking people to help with local records - by tweeting sighting of hornets, for example. And the museum sends personal replies to tweets received.

Results

Press releases launching Oisín attracted strong media attention with coverage in newspapers around the county. During the first five months, the museum tweeted 225 times and gained 207 followers. These included several parent groups and a number of regional and national museums.

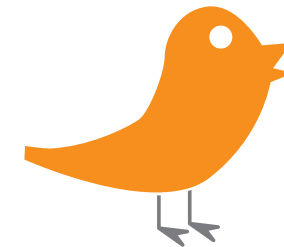
Lessons learned

Oisín and Twitter have helped the museum service to communicate with people it would not otherwise engage. They also have proved to be an excellent tool for engaging with the museum's peer group. Oisín has developed his own personality and museum staff are continuing to explore his - and Twitter's - further potential. Figures for the end of February 2012 show progress made with a total of 896 followers and 2,636 tweets received.

869
followers



2,636
@ mentions



Case Study 2 WCC Communications: Online news audio clips

warwickshire.gov.uk
[@wcc_news](https://twitter.com/wcc_news)

WCC Communications team set up an AudioBoo account so they could post audio clips, relating to news and publicity campaigns, online. They were unable to do this directly onto the WCC website.

Aims

To make news and communications clips available to users of the WCC website with just one click to play - and no software compatibility issues. In addition, using AudioBoo meant audio clips could be simultaneously tweeted, via a link, to followers of WCC news on Twitter.

Operation

A total of 39 audio clips were hosted on AudioBoo, with accompanying still image when available. The length of clip ranged from 4 seconds (soundbite) to 3 minutes 43 seconds (radio play). A link to the WCC news AudioBoo account was placed on the front page of the Warwickshire Direct website.

Content

Topics covered by the clips included community forums, consultation on residential

care, the Safe in Warwickshire campaign, and the launch of a Fire & Rescue DVD for schools. AudioBoo was used to air a short radio play by school pupils about bullying, band-members of the Crookes talking about their Get it Loud in Libraries gig in Rugby, and a WCC interpreter talking about her experiences for the European Day of Languages.

The pilot project coincided with a six-month period of communications support provided by WCC to Warwick District Council (WDC), for whom clips were made available on a joint WDC and WCC community safety campaign, a WDC graduate recruitment project, the launch of Heritage Open Days, and a dog fouling campaign.

Results

Together the 39 audio clips were played 2,690 times. Eight clips received more than 100 plays and 24 received more than 50 plays each. The most popular clip, played 250 times, featured a WDC dog warden talking about cleaning up after pets. The least-played clip, with 14 plays, was about identifying needs and delivering drug and alcohol services. All the clips were automatically sent to 969 WCC news followers on Twitter.

Lessons learned

AudioBoo provided a solution to the problem of not being able to place audio clips directly onto

39
audio clips



2,690
total plays

the WCC website, and uploading clips onto AudioBoo proved to be easy. The facility to automatically send clips to the growing number of WCC news followers on Twitter was an extra benefit. The relatively high volume of listens, particularly for some clips, exceeded expectations and all clips, covering a very wide range of topics, were played.



Case Study 3 County Arts Services: Creative Warwickshire

[flickr.com/groups/
creativewarwickshire](https://www.flickr.com/groups/creativewarwickshire)

The County Arts Service set up a Creative Warwickshire Flickr Account to allow local artists, both amateur and professional, to share images and/or videos of their work. All kinds of creativity were welcomed including dance, drama, film, fashion, animation, visual arts, writing, crafts and photography.

Aims

To showcase and celebrate creativity in Warwickshire.

Operation

The Head of Arts has overall responsibility for the Flickr account which is administered by an Assistant Arts Officer.

Interaction

Content is supplied by local artists themselves and is only monitored by County Arts for inappropriate postings, not editing or selection purposes. Anyone who registers with Flickr can post comments on the works displayed, creating a 'community' and giving the artists valuable feedback.

Results

After six months the account had 34 members who between them had posted 191 images. Contributors were wide-ranging and included well-known commercial artists, amateur painters and photographers, and umbrella users - project leaders and facilitators - using the Creative Warwickshire Flickr account to share images of collaborative projects with participants and stakeholders.

Lessons learned

No inappropriate images or comments were posted during the pilot project. The wide range of contributors and high quality of work displayed exceeded expectations. Some of the professional contributors had no previous, regular contact with County Arts. Looking to the future, growing the number of umbrella users, in particular, would help Creative Warwickshire to reach more people. In addition, County Arts planned to use its network of contacts to promote the group as a resource for workshop and project leaders.

The Flickr account requires minimal resources, has attracted strong contributions, and has shown significant growth, with a total of 43 members at the end of February 2012 displaying 291 artworks.

291
artworks



43
members



Case Study 4 Library & Information Service: News and events

@warkslibraries

Warwickshire Library & Information Service (WLIS) set up a Twitter account to share news and details of forthcoming events on an additional platform.

Aims

The original purpose of the account was to provide a mechanism for publishing library service news and countywide events on Twitter, reaching people who might not access the information by other means. This would in turn promote the WLIS website.

Operation

The account is administered by the WLIS Electronic Officer. The vast majority of tweets during the pilot phase were taken from WCC's corporate events and news feeds. Additional ad-hoc postings generally related to practical matters such as information on short-notice library closures and re-openings.

Interaction

The Twitter account was set up to share information in a new way. The underlying aim was to increase visits to the WLIS webpages and there were, initially, no plans to attract followers or encourage interaction.

Results

By the beginning of February 2011 the libraries Twitter account had 87 followers and had received 365 tweets. Followers include local interest groups such as Warwick Mums and What's in Kenilworth, and complimentary businesses like Astley Book Farm. Interest from Warwick Mums led to a number of local mothers using Twitter to get news of children's events at their local libraries.

Lessons learned

News items worked well but events details had to be manually entered. Automatically-generated (RSS feed) events information would otherwise be published too close to event dates to be useful. There was some duplication of late-breaking news, via ad-hoc tweets, with the WCC news Twitter account.

Following the pilot project, WLIS decided to use the Twitter account more proactively to interact with individual customers, authors and groups. As well as regularly responding to customer tweets to answer queries and sort out problems, WLIS now use their Twitter account to promote new stock and recently-introduced services such as free e-book loans. As a result the number of followers and tweets received is increasing. By the end of February 2012 the totals were 338 and 3,154 respectively.

338
followers



3,154
@ mentions



Case Study 5 WCC Schools: Education news

@wcc_schools

The Warwickshire Schools Twitter account was set up for instant, easy-access information-sharing on education matters.

Aims

To provide an easy source of general schools and education news relevant to Warwickshire parents and teachers, including local and national messages.

Operation

The account is jointly managed by two members of the WCC Communications team who update the site daily and regularly interact with followers. Links to more information are provided wherever possible.

Interaction

Residents, schools and professionals use the Twitter account to contact WCC on a range of education issues. In June 2011, for example, topics included museum visits, fostering, school food and anti-bullying campaigns.



Results

By mid-June 2011 the Warwickshire Schools Twitter account had produced 745 tweets and had 257 followers. These included national and local press, local councillors, MPs, education professionals, governors, schools, the county's five district and borough councils, and members of the public. Links to further information on education topics and other key areas, such as family information and fostering services, proved popular.

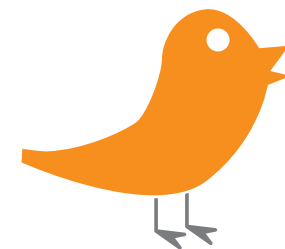
Lessons learned

The Twitter site has proved to be a very useful tool for communicating not only with the general public but also the local press. Information is regularly used by the local media to showcase work going on in Warwickshire schools and, more widely, to support the county's children, young people and families. By the end of February 2012 the site had 495 followers and had received 461 tweets. It has further potential for growth in terms of both content and customer engagement, as Communications promote the benefits of sharing good practice and showcasing their work to county schools.

495
followers



461
@ mentions



Case Study 6 Warwickshire Direct: Information & customer service

@warksdirect

The Warwickshire Direct Twitter account was created as part of the drive to provide seamless access to information and services provided by the county's local authorities.

Aims

To improve access to information and customer service.

Operation

The site is jointly managed by two Communications Officers supported by the rest of the news team. Content is updated daily and there is regular interaction with followers. Links are provided to more information wherever possible.

Interaction

Residents, bloggers and professionals use Twitter to contact Warwickshire Direct on a wide range of topics. In June 2011, for example, these included the library consultation, parking issues, road gritting, elderly care, and the launch and associated costs of the new Warwickshire Direct website.

Results

By mid-June 2011 the site had produced 745 tweets and had 274 followers. These included national and local press, local councillors, MPs, Government agencies, the county's five district and borough councils, and members of the public.

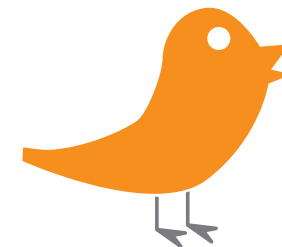
Lessons learned

The Twitter site has proved to be a very useful tool for communicating not only with the general public but also the local press. Information is regularly used by the local media to inform the public about issues and services. Links to more information can be used to great effect, as during the library consultation when Twitter followers were directed to the library consultation blog. At the end of February 2012 the site had 765 followers and had received 1,496 tweets.

765
followers



1,496
@ mentions



Case Study 7 Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service

[@warksfirerescue](#)

The Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Twitter account was created in January 2011 as an extra platform for sharing information with the public.

Aims

To increase awareness of the range of services provided by Warwickshire Fire & Rescue.

Operation

The account is managed by a member of the Communications team with support from a Fire & Rescue Officer. The site provides information on incidents, news stories, and promotes community fire safety work and school visits. The site is updated on a daily basis and has regular interaction with its followers.

Interaction

During the pilot phase residents used Twitter to contact Fire & Rescue on a range of issues including incidents attended, how to get a free home fire safety check, and tweets from nurseries looking to arrange a fire service visit. In addition, the local press used Twitter to request information on services provided, and the platform was used to respond to negative

media stories regarding changes to Leamington Fire Station.

Results

By mid-June 2011 the site had produced 273 tweets and had 476 followers including national and local press, local councillors, MPs, other fire & rescue services, and members of the public.

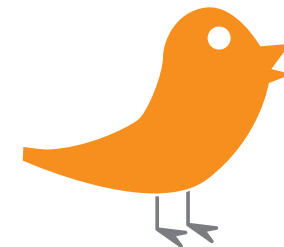
Lessons learned

The site has proved to be a very useful tool for communicating not only with the general public, but also with the local press. Information on the site is regularly used by the local media to inform the public about areas to avoid whilst an incident is being managed. It is also used to promote the services provided by Fire & Rescue, focusing on prevention and awareness-raising as well as call-outs and emergencies. At the end of February 2012 the site had received 837 tweets and had 1,451 followers.

1,451
followers



837
@ mentions



Conclusion

Deliver savings:

Whilst social media will not deliver large scale budget savings overnight, there is no doubt that it can make a significant contribution to any targeted channel shift or customer access campaign.

Increase communications reach:

The new social media tools can be used to broadcast information to a wider Warwickshire audience almost instantly. This means that public information can be issued by these new channels, both increasing our communications reach and with very little extra cost.

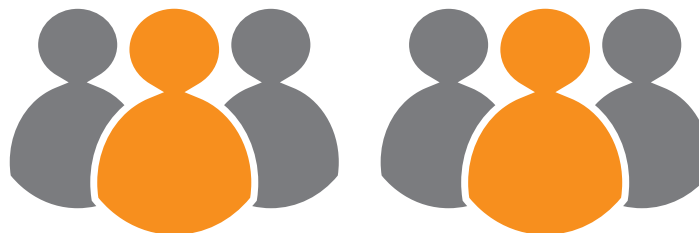
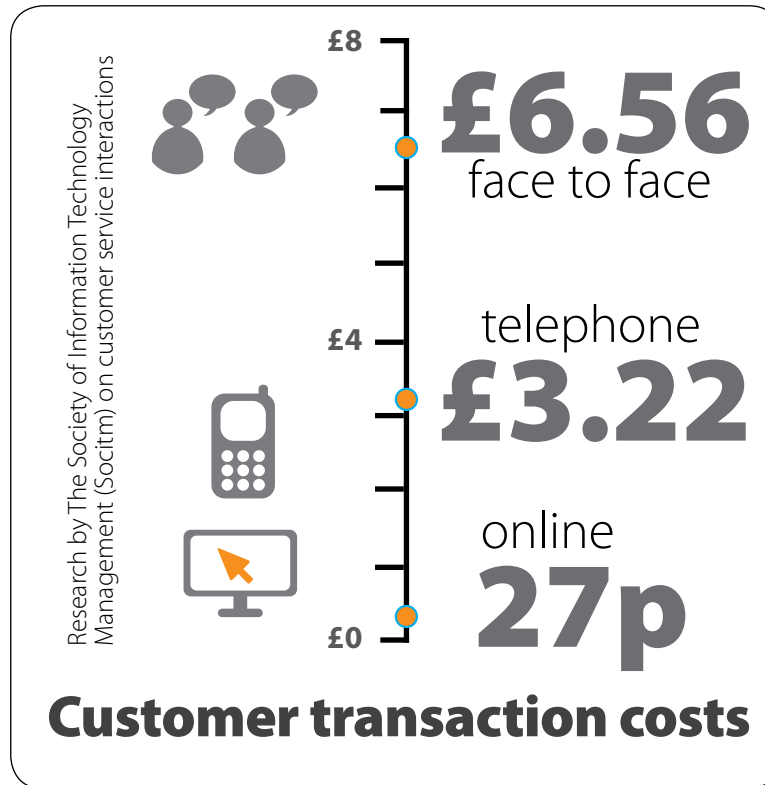
Boost democratic engagement:

Social media can help engage people in elections and government initiatives and consultations giving local people a say in local decision-making.

Boost staff collaboration and communications:

Social media can help improve communications among staff with discussion forums e.g. Yammer.

For further information contact:
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46%

of councils use social media for dealing with customer queries

35%

of councils have identified reduced call volumes from using social media

76%

of councils have identified improved service delivery

54%

of councils have identified increased customer satisfaction



