

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
DATE:	14TH September 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
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TITLE:	Update on Communications	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Please list all the appendices here, clearly indicating any which are exempt and the reasons for exemption		

1 THE ISSUE

This report accompanies a presentation on the work of the Communications Team and its changing role in a more digital/online landscape.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

2.1 Note the presentation and the changes taking place that affect how the Council communicates with the wider community.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

3.1 There are no resource implications as a direct result of the presentation which is to inform Members of the Panel of the ongoing work of the Council's Communications Team.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 This is an update report for consideration by the Resources PDS Panel.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 This report sets out the work of the Communications Team and the changes that have been taking place in the media both nationally and locally.

5.2 The internet and social media have made significant changes to the media landscape. 89% of the population nationally have access to the internet with the vast majority of users going online to engage in conversations with friends, colleagues, organisations or the wider community. Facebook has over 37million users in the UK.

5.3 Information is shared widely and citizens have the opportunity to broadcast their views much more widely. This has changed the way that people behave. On average 8 hrs and 41 minutes is spent per day on texting, talking online, gaming, listening or watching. This is more than the average time spent sleeping.

5.4 Online TV has been rapidly growing. Sky TV were the first to screen a news broadcast on Facebook live video, which received 180,000 views, following the tragic incident in Nice.

5.5 The growth of digital media has had an impact on the printed media with a reduction in sales of over 60% of printed newspapers nationally but a doubling of users of newspaper websites and growth in online-only news sites. This is becoming a very competitive area as newspapers work hard to earn income from their online assets.

5.6 In this wider context the Communications Team has significantly changed the way that it works to include:

- Greater use of social media- particularly Twitter. It has now a Twitter reach of over 22 million for the main account only and over 14,000 followers. The Council has a total of 10 Twitter accounts and a range of Facebook accounts so its reach will be that much greater.
- Social media is being used as an integrated part of campaigns to change the way that people behave. Social media was used to encourage greater voter turnout in the referendum, to share safety information about the Bath Bomb and to target audiences that previously were hard to reach through traditional media.
- The Communications Team produces a range of videos for specific use on social media.

5.7 The growth in digital communications presents greater opportunities going forward but also new challenges for the Council. The presentation sets out new ways to:

- Keep people informed about key developments and services in real time.
- To support the recruitment of staff to ensure the Council has the best people to continue to deliver services.
- To support information to increase engagement with the wider community and to support community focused activities such as volunteering.
- To support democratic engagement.

- Develop new channels– for example Snapchat is the fastest growing account used by young people.

5.8 The update presentation also sets out the challenges that the Communications Team face and ways to address them. This includes

- Supporting the 10% of the local population that currently don't have access to the internet
- The increased expectation from citizens for faster responses. People expect a response within an hour when they contact the Council directly on social media.
- Social media continues to change with new channels appearing and the team and the Council needs to adapt to these changes

5.9 The update presentation will set out proposed changes to the website, how a more integrated approach will be effective in providing more information and how the Council is proposing to support community engagement online.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 Members are being asked to note the presentation

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 This is an update report for members and sets out the current approach to provide better information to the community. Information has been taken from national best practice as well as views from across the Council.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The approach to communications has been developed over a six month period as part of changing the way that the Council communicates. As part of this process a wide range of senior officers and members of staff have been consulted and been involved.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	