REPORT TO: **SCRUTINY RESOURCES COMMITTEE**
Date of Meeting: **Scrutiny Resources Committee – 18th March 2015**
Report of: **Cllr Bull, Chair of the Social Media Task and Finish Group and**
                      Champion for Community Engagement
Title: **Social Media – interim report and recommendations**

Is this a Key Decision?
No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?
Executive

1.   What is the report about?

This report outlines the conclusion of this Task and Finish Group's investigations into the Council's current use of and presence through social media, providing an update to the Scrutiny Resources Committee together with recommendations for approval.

The Group were tasked with exploring whether the Council's current use of social media continues to enhance effective engagement with the local community, individuals and external organisations and to investigate whether any improvements were desirable or necessary. Members acknowledged the ever increasing importance of social media and its effective use which affords the Council a heightened profile and can enhance the speed in which the Council can respond to enquiries and deliver services.

2.   Recommendations:

That the Scrutiny Resources Committee:-

a) have the opportunity to consider and comment upon the findings of this Task and Finish Group;
b) agree that social media training should be incorporated into the Councillors' induction training programme.
c) acknowledge the finding that the Council's current use of and presence through social media is of a high standard and as such, no further improvements are considered necessary at this point in time.
d) agree that this Task and Finish Group should meet once more in 9 months' time to review the position to see if it remains the same or whether there are any suggested improvements.
e) agree that this Task and Finish Group will report back to the Scrutiny Resources Committee after October 2015 with a full update on the position together with any further recommendations.

3.   Reasons for the recommendation:

- to recognise the work of this Task and Finish Group and invite its parent committee to comment upon findings.
- to ensure that the Council's use of and presence through social media is monitored.
- to look at ways to maximise the full potential of the Council's use of social media fulfilling criteria within the Corporate Plan, Core Strategy, Exeter Vision relating to community engagement - to tell people what is going on, listen and

respond to their views and provide the community with the information that they need in an instantaneous manner, developing and supporting citizen involvement and consulting more effectively whilst improving publicity and accessibility of events and providing more direct and quick resolutions to problems.

4.   What are the resource implications including non financial resources:

None at present.

5.   Section 151 Officer comments:

This report currently raises no issues for the Section 151 officer to consider at present.

6.   What are the legal aspects?

None at present.

7.   Monitoring officer Comments

This report currently raises no issues for the Monitoring officer to consider.

8.   Report Details:

Following the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme meeting in July 2014, social media was highlighted as a priority area for Scrutiny Task and Finish Group investigation. The importance of social media and the Council's use of it is recognised, together with the need to review whether improvements could be made to current use and profile.

Membership of this Group consisted of:-

   Cllr Bull (Chair and Champion for Community Engagement)
   Cllr Baldwin
   Cllr Mottram
   Cllr Winterbottom
   Cllr Morris
   Cllr Brimble
   Cllr Robson
   Cllr Pearson

Council Officers:-

-   Bruce Luxton, Corporate Manager, Policy/Communications/ Community Engagement
-   Sarah Selway, Democratic Services Manager (Committees)
-   Anne-Marie Hawley, Scrutiny Programme Officer

Questions which the Group considered are detailed as follows:-

- What social media is available?
- What social media does the Council currently use and what is it used for?
- How effective is social media in relation to engagement with all local communities, individuals and external organisations?
- How can the effectiveness of social media be measured?
- Can the Council's current use of social media be improved and if so how?

The Corporate Manager, Policy/Communications/Community Engagement provided the Task and Finish Group with an overview addressing the social media landscape, the council's use of Twitter, the council's use of Facebook, measures of success, engaging with communities and future developments. The Group discussed these aspects and had the opportunity to ask questions, following which they decided that:-

1. The Group was generally content with the current direction and profile of the Council's use of social media so there was no reason to take the Group's enquiries any further at this stage.

2. Induction training on social media should be provided to all Councillors to not only cover the "do's and don'ts" but also what can be achieved through use of social media.

3. The group should reconvene in 6/9 month's time to review the position and see how the use of social media by the Council has evolved. The Corporate Manager, Policy/Communications/Community Engagement could provide the Group with an update and suggestions as to how it may be improved with consideration to available resources.

It was decided that a future meeting of the Group could consider such questions as:-

- What might be required from Members in so far as social media and its use is concerned?
- What else should the Council look to do through social media?
- Is there anything else that the Council could do that would be useful to enable improved engagement through social media?

9   **What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, Economy safety and the environment?**

Not applicable.

Cllr Bull, Champion for Community Engagement

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:
None
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