



East Dean & Friston

P a r i s h C o u n c i l

Date: 5th October 2017

Title: Report Item 8 – Council use of Social Media

By: Councillor A Hookham

Purpose: To summarise the pros and cons of using social media

Recommendations: a) To note the report
b) To approve council use of Facebook for a trial period

I will start by listing the negatives of using social media and some possible solutions to counter these.

- Abusive users; using social media is of course going to create a 24/7 public forum for everyone to use. This can obviously lead to abuse by certain people. So what can be done:
 - We make the page so that only we can post things as a council. This means that members of the public can only comment on what we have posted!
 - We set very clear terms and conditions of what sort of behaviour is allowed while using this platform, which we pin to the top of the page for everyone to see.
 - By having these terms and conditions we are protecting ourselves when we have to take action against users.
 - If someone comments on our post with something abusive, these are the steps to take:
 - Take a screenshot of what was said.
 - Hide or delete the comment so no-one else can see it.
 - Private message the person referring them to the T&C's, and say that that sort of behaviour is not tolerated.
 - If they persist, we can ban them from the page and we can even report them to Facebook. If we resort to reporting them, it is vital that we have screenshots of the comments as evidence.
- Controversial topics:
 - Since we have control over what we post we can simply not post about potentially controversial topics.
 - If someone comments about such a topic on one of our posts, we can simply reply with 'We will be discussing this at our next PC meeting, if you would like to voice an opinion, please join us during the public session or follow the link below to put in a formal correspondence that will be used in the meeting.' or something along those lines.

- People confusing a councillors personal opinion with that of the Councils:
 - In the T&C's we will clearly state that what a councillor chooses to post about on their personal Facebook page has no relevance or link to the opinion of the Council.

So onto the positives of using social media:

- So many people are on Facebook now, and hence it offers us the opportunity to bring our community closer together in a more modern way.
- It's a really quick and easy way of getting information to people. In an emergency, like the BG mist, we could be sharing the local police reports and give our own safety message.
- We can put on events, for example, the village fete, fireworks, etc, this increases the public's knowledge of the event and in the case of fireworks we could use it to gain volunteers and see whether there is actually an interest!
- It's a brilliant platform to use in order to get people to go to our website, as it's something people check regularly unlike the website.

APPENDIX – Reissue of Report from the September 2017 council meeting

Over the summer I have attended two social media workshops held by SALC. The first was describing the pros and cons of councils using social media and the second explained the best way to set it up and which internal settings to use in order to avoid the potential cons.

Based on these workshops I believe that we should initially look at Facebook. My reasoning behind this is due to the fact that Facebook has much more capabilities, is easier to set up and other platforms can always be set up later. Hence, my report is going to primarily focus on Facebook.

Since a lot of the information I have gathered from the workshops is better shown than explained, this report will mainly cover the most important points. I will give a brief presentation/demonstration of everything else at the PC meeting.

The first thing to note is that social media is supposed to be used in conjunction with a website. It is therefore important to make sure the design of both complement each other and we set out clear guidelines of what goes on Facebook and what goes on the website. For example, papers for council meetings; we could put on Facebook:

“Our next Parish Council meeting is being held on If you wish to read the agenda for this month’s meeting, please follow the link below.

<http://www.edfparishcouncil.org.uk/index.asp?pageid=625119>”

This means we still make use of the website.

One of the biggest concerns raised at the workshops was how to deal with someone being abusive. The first thing we would want to do would be to write some T & C’s, which we could pin to the top of the page. If someone was abusive we could then refer them to these, take a screenshot of what was said, hide their comment and even block them. There is also a setting which allows only us to post new things on the page. That way people can only comment, and as mentioned above these can be hidden.

The first few months of setting up a Facebook page are the most crucial!! As a council we would all have to share the page and get our friends and family to like and follow it! This will allow the page to become more popular. To help with this we should also like other groups/organisations pages, such as, Beachy Head Chaplaincy, Village Hall, SALC, Emergency Services, etc. This way they may like us back!!

In terms of the running of the page after the initial few months, I believe it should be a councillor’s job. At the workshops there were mainly Clerks, who were hesitant to recommend having a Facebook page as it would take up far too much of their time that should be spent on more important business. However, in order to make sure the council always has access to the page, the clerk needs to be an admin for the page. Obviously, I am happy to take this role as long as I am on the council.

Finally, the page will allow us to create events. For example, if we did decide to hold a fireworks event, but first want to scope interest, this would be a great way to do it!

There are obviously many more capabilities of a Facebook page, which could be explored more if we do decide to get one. However, the ones listed above are the ones I believe to be the most important, and the most relevant to the decision of whether to get a Facebook page.