

Social Media Full Report

By Amanda Hookham

Contents

1. Initial Report	2-3
2. Pros and Cons of using Social Media (amended and extended)	4
3. Facebook users data for East Dean and Friston	5
4. Comparison of our current methods of communication	6
5. Clerks opinions and T&C's	7
6. Mayfield and Five Ashes PC Draft Social Media Policy	8-10
7. Conclusion	11

Social Media Report

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.

Pros and Cons of using social media

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

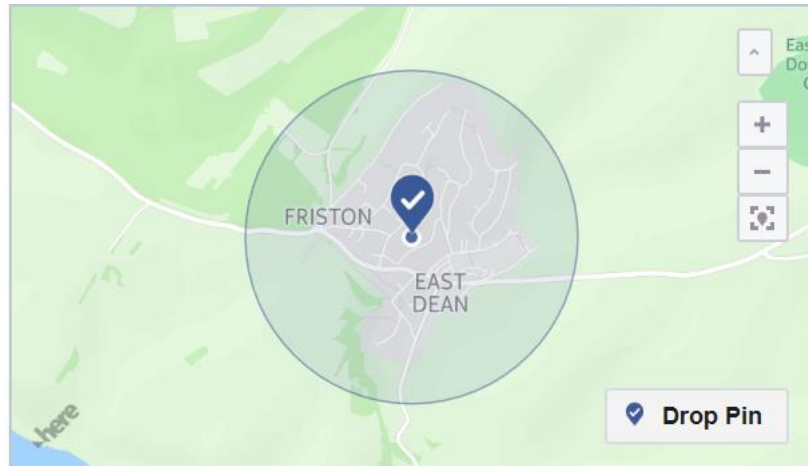
- Abusive users; using social media is of course going to create a 24/7 public forum for everyone to use. This can obviously lead to abuse by certain people. So what can be done:
 - We make the page so that only we can post things as a council. This means that members of the public can only comment on 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 councillor's 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.
- **Personal contact details being too open to the general public:**
 - **We set up Parish Council email addresses and use these to replace our personal ones on the website.**

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. [See page 5.](#)
- 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.
- [See page 6 for more!](#)

Facebook Users Data for East Dean and Friston

Based on the 2011 census, there were approximately 1,675 people living in East Dean and Friston. Below are figures taken from Facebook that state how many people were connected to Facebook within the circled area (picture below) at a given time.



- Tuesday 31st October 2000: 1,139.
- Tuesday 31st October 2200: 1,156.
- Wednesday 1st November 0000: 1,139.
- Wednesday 1st November 1000: 1,137.

Breakdown of the different age ranges using Facebook in the village at this time:

- 13-18 years: 86
 - 19-29 years: 222
 - 30-39 years: 115
 - 40-49 years: 204
 - 50-64 years: 356
 - 65+ years: 154
- Wednesday 1st November 1200: 1,121.
 - Wednesday 1st November 1400: 1,137.
 - Wednesday 1st November 1800: 1,137.
 - Wednesday 1st November 2200: 1,132.

Breakdown of the different age ranges using Facebook in the village at this time:

- 13-18 years: 86
- 19-29 years: 199
- 30-39 years: 121
- 40-49 years: 209
- 50-64 years: 351
- 65+ years: 164

The average number of users over this time is 1,137. This means that 68% of the people in our village are on Facebook at any one time. Out of this 45% are 50+ and 63% are 40+.

Comparison of Current Methods of Communication

Due to the change in data protection laws, it is vital that we find a new, easier way of communicating with our Village. Yes, we have the website, the parish magazine and our email list, however:

- The email list: not everyone in the village is on it (**There are a little under 500 addresses on our email register. Fairly steady with one or two joining per month and about the same number moving away.**). This will be affected by the change in data protection laws, so we could see a drop in these figures.
 - From the previous Section, our reach with Facebook will be much greater.
 - Obviously with Facebook these laws do not apply. If someone no longer wishes to see our posts, it is up to them to unfollow us. Hence, no work for us in that respect and Katrina isn't spending countless evenings going through all her emailing list records deleting people who have not re-subscribed. Also from the previous Section, there are more people on Facebook, then on the email list!
- Parish Magazine: Despite its wide circulation, not everyone will necessarily read it. It has a very specific target market! This type of communication can't be used for urgent items or in emergencies!
 - With Facebook, there is no target audience as such, because we will putting up various types of information that will appeal to varying target audiences. With respect to urgent items and emergencies, Facebook is ideal as it is instant.
- The website: a brilliant tool, but again not everyone would necessarily think to go to it for information. **The average number of website sessions (visits) is around 900 per month with peaks when those on the email register are advised of PCM agenda and related papers, and again when advised of minutes and summary minutes. Around 3,000 pages are viewed per month i.e. about 3.5 pages on average per session.**
 - Everyone who is on Facebook will be looking at it regularly. This means that they will be seeing what we post as soon as we post it. It will also work as a platform to get more people visiting the website. The more people who visit the website the better it is as an investment!
 - As an example, during the BG mist, the first think I did was get my phone so that I could text and Facebook my colleagues!! I was able to keep up to date with the situation by already having followed the Eastbourne emergency services and the BBC on Facebook.

*Statistics provided by Stewart.

Dear All

Would anyone whose council has a Facebook page be able to share their T&Cs with me please?

My council is thinking about starting a page but is concerned about the possibility of online trolling.

All the best

Katrina

Katrina Larkin

Clerk to East Dean & Friston Parish Council

Katrina, I was also concerned and in settings block comments emails and messages... I use it for info and it can take up some time, depending on what you plan to put on there.

We have more negative comments on twitter than Facebook,. I simply do not respond and if they are offensive you just delete them.

Kind regards Jo

Jo Ognjanovic | Town Clerk

Polegate Town Council

Hi Katrina;

We have a facebook page but its controlled by an admin. Each post then has to be authorised before its posted so you never have anything on there that you don't want – unless someone makes a comment on a post I suppose

Kind Regards

Jackie

Jackie Scarff

Clerk to Ninfield Parish Council

We have gone for the "cart before the horse" approach and have had Facebook and Twitter for a couple of years but no policy. There is a meeting coming up with an agenda item to set up policy for Social Media and would appreciate a view of the copies you receive.

Hope it is a nice sunny day on the Coast.

Trevor

Clerk to Rotherfield Parish Council

Hi Katrina,

Unfortunately you can't restrict trolls unless you make it a closed group and this wouldn't necessarily be helpful for a parish council site. You can hide comments on FB if people continually write comments against posts or just handle any responses as positively and politely as possible but if they persist just block them. Often other users will chip in if someone is being offensive. I think trolling tends to happen more on Twitter than Facebook. We haven't had any issues in the time I've been here.

Many thanks

Holly Goring

Town Clerk



Mayfield and Five Ashes Parish Council

Social Media Policy (DRAFT)

1. Policy statement

- 1.1. This policy is intended to help employees including clerks, RFO's, Executive Officers, part-time, fixed-term and casual employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy), volunteers and members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.
- 1.2. This policy outlines the standards we require employees and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor your use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 1.3. This policy supplements Mayfield and Five Ashes Parish Council's Internet and Email Policy.

2. The scope of the policy

- 2.1. All employees, volunteers and members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our council.
- 2.2. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

- 3.1. The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2. The Parish Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.
- 3.3. All employees, volunteers and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Parish Clerk or Chairman of the Parish Council.
- 3.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Parish Clerk.

4. Using social media sites in our name

- 4.1. Only the Parish Clerk or chosen representative are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name and on our behalf.

5. Using social media

- 5.1. We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about our council and community. We also recognise the importance of our employees, volunteers and members joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction in social media.
 - a) Before using social media on any matter that might affect the interests of the council you must have read and understood this policy and the Email and Use of Internet Policy.

- b) employees and volunteers must have sought and gained prior written approval to do so from the Parish Clerk or named representative.

6. Rules for use of social media

- 6.1. Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:
- 6.2. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 6.3. Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Parish Clerk or Chairman of the Parish Council.
- 6.4. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Parish Clerk or Chairman.
- 6.5. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 6.6. Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.
- 6.7. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 6.8. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.
- 6.9. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.
- 6.10. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- 6.11. Don't discuss employees without their prior approval.
- 6.12. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
- 6.13. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

7. Monitoring use of social media websites

- 7.1. Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure.
- 7.2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us.
- 7.3. In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):
 - a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
 - b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;

- c) material which is offensive, obscene
- d) criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council, members, or our employees;
- e) confidential information about the council or anyone else
- f) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council); or
- g) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

If you notice any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy please report it to the Parish Clerk or Chairman.

8. Monitoring and review of this policy

- 8.1. The Parish Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, I am still very much in favour of getting a Facebook page, if not more so due to the recent bits of research.

Other Parish Councils and Town Councils have embraced social media, by making sure they adopt a strong social media policy. From their feedback they also appear to not be concerned by 'trolling', due to Facebook providing plenty of ways to deal with this. My personal opinion on this, is that, we are a small village and a kind village, hence shouldn't have much trouble with abusive users, which also appears to be the opinion of the clerks who have responded to Katrina! This is not the same as saying, we won't have to deal with people who raise controversial topics, but this is a problem that has been dealt with in the Pros and Cons document on page 4.

I am confident that in our discussions at meetings and in Katrina's and my research we have come up with the best solutions to counter all the negatives raised, associated with having a Facebook page. In particular, I believe that the safeguards we will put in place with respect to our personal contact information makes having a Facebook page safe for us as individuals.

As shown on page 5, there is a considerable proportion of our Villagers on Facebook. Our reach with the email list is approximately 30% of East Dean and Friston's population, compared to the 68% with Facebook. Now if we look at the website, in a month we get approximately 900 visits i.e. approximately 30 a day and a lot of this is going to be due to the email list. Imagine how many people we could get website, a day, if we had a Facebook page directing 1,137 people to it!

I hope this pack has been helpful to the making of your decision on whether you want the PC to have a Facebook page.