

## Getting the most out of social media for neighbourhood planning



There is no denying that tried and tested engagement methods, including evening meetings in village halls or mail-outs, have their place. However, these may limit the range of people that get engaged. For example, parents with young children may not have time to go to these meetings. Similarly, such styles are less popular with younger people.

If used well, social media can be a great way to reach a much wider audience across the whole area. Here are some top tips to help you get off on the right foot:

### **Don't just jump in- strategize**

There are so many social media tools out there, including Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram. Ask yourself, what do we want to use social media for? Who are we trying to reach? This will help you decide what forms of social media you should be using.

## Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Different groups use different social media platforms. Some demographics may use Facebook, whilst some may opt instead for Twitter. Others may use Instagram more, which is especially common among under 25s. It is good to have a couple of social media platforms on the go. That way you can reach as wide an audience as possible.

Twitter can be great for short and snappy messaging, whereas on Facebook you could dive a little deeper and provide more information. If you want to tell more of a story, perhaps making a video on YouTube could be the way to go. Having a variety of platforms allows for this flexibility.

## Get a clear message out

Keep posts (or content) short and punchy and steer clear of jargon and planning speak. If advertising an event via social media, framing it like 'do you want to make sure your children have houses in the town in the future?' is more likely to get the attention of people than messages like 'Come and have your say on land use planning issues in our area'. Photographs and images also help make content more appealing and eye catching. This increases the likelihood of things being read.

## Don't overdo it

It can be tempting to broadcast everything via social media to keep people in the loop. This can have the opposite effect and people may start ignoring your content. Choose what you post on social media wisely- you don't need to do it nonstop. Keep it for things you don't want people to miss.

## It's a two-way conversation

It isn't as simple as broadcasting content and job done. People will respond to you and it is good to respond back and get a conversation going. Failing to respond to people may leave them feeling ignored.

## Measure how well you are doing

Track your metrics to see how successful your use of social media is. How many retweets and mentions are you getting on Twitter? How many people have viewed your post on Facebook? How many views are your videos getting on YouTube (and are people commenting)?

## How do I do it?

Worried you don't have the skills or know how? Like most things, it is easy when you know how. If in doubt speak to tech-savvy and social media addicted to see if they are willing to help on the social media front. Or have you got anyone with comms or marketing experience on your forum or steering group?

## Search for some best practice guidance

A quick Google search will pull up lots of really useful guides on how to get the most out of social media. It is a good idea to start there.

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