Social Media Strategy 2024

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Purpose

Colchester is a great place to live, work, and thrive.
We will use social media to highlight its strengths, enhance its image, and showcase the positive work of the Council.

We aim to use social media not only to support income generation, but also to promote our future aspirations and ambitions for Colchester. Our focus is on fostering business and economic growth whilst improving the quality of life for residents.

To achieve this, our social media strategy must be bold, innovative, and willing to take calculated risks. We need to stay ahead with trends and communicate clear, authentic messages directly.

The primary purpose of our social media presence is to align our communications with our strategic plan. We strive to promote a positive image of both the Council and Colchester to the right audience, at the right time. Our goal is to build a strong relationship between the Council and its residents, reaching often overlooked or under-targeted audiences.

We have made great strides towards this over the last eighteen months, and continuing to push boundaries will help us meet the objectives set out in this strategy.

Over the last eighteen months, we have made significant progress. By continuing to push boundaries, we will achieve the goals outlined in this strategy.

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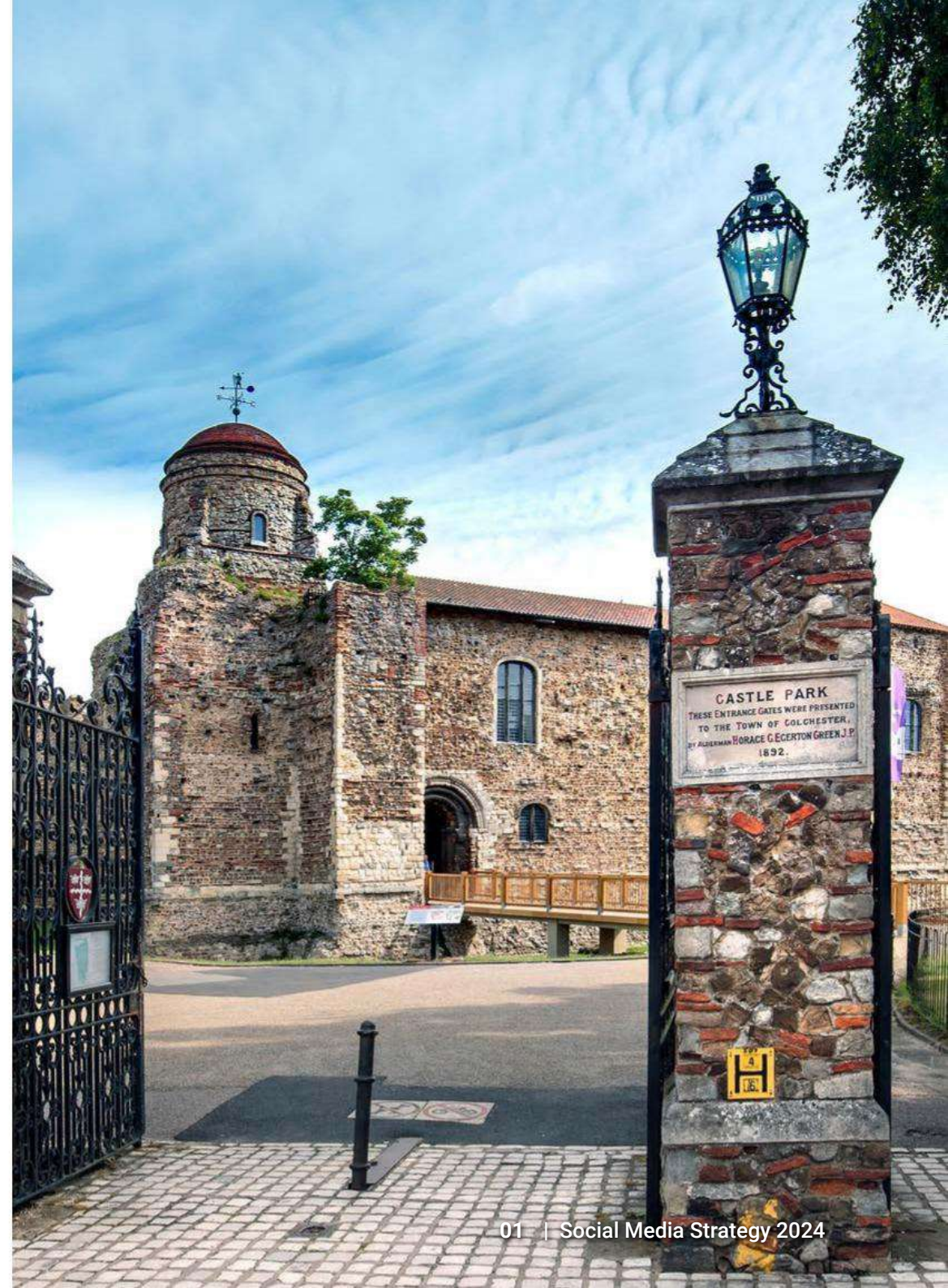
Objectives

The Social Media Strategy supports the strategic plan, Communication Action Plan and digital innovation
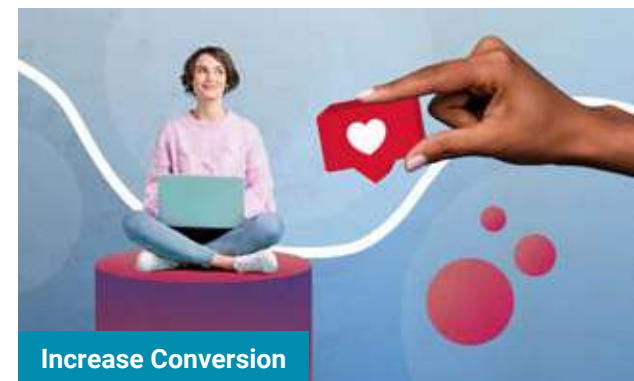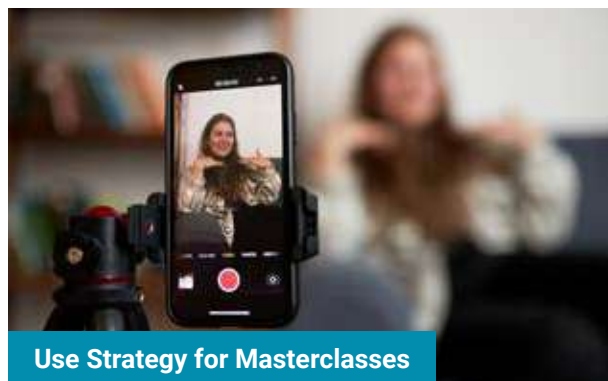
Communication Strategy Objectives

Prioritising the delivery of our communications and marketing work around strategic plan priority areas:

• Response to climate emergency.

• Deliver modern services for a modern city.

• Improve health, well-being and happiness.

• Deliver homes for those most in need.

• Grow our economy so that everyone benefits.

• Celebrate our city, heritage and culture.

We Will Also:

• Deliver effective coordinated communications and marketing messages.

• Create a strong, recognisable and trusted brand.

• Lead by example, and reflect the aims and objectives of the Council in our communications.

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Increase Reach

Increase Positive Engagement

Develop Tone of Voice

Create Authenticity

Build A Relationship Based on Trust

Focus on Quality Over Quantity

Use Strategy for Masterclasses

Increase Conversion
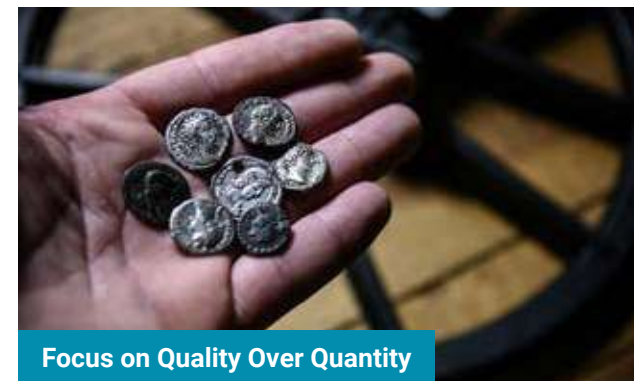
Current Metrics

Current social media accounts and metrics as of September 2024

Facebook:
@EnjoyColchester

- Followers: **22,276**
- Average post reach: **24,841**
- Average post reactions: **156**
- Average shares: **21**
- Average comments: **60**

LinkedIn:
@Colchester City Council

- Followers: **7,512**
- Average post reach: **1,729**
- Average post reactions: **37**
- Average shares: **<1**
- Average comments: **2**

Instagram:
@ColchesterCityCouncil

- Followers: **4,045**
- Average post reach: **886**
- Average post likes: **49**
- Average shares: **<1**
- Average comments: **2**

X (formerly Twitter):
@ColchesterCityCouncil

- Followers: **17,358**
- Average post reach: **853**
- Average post reactions: **9**
- Average shares/reposts: **2**
- Average comments: **1**

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Goals

Key social media account metric goals for September 2025

Facebook:
@EnjoyColchester

• Followers: **28,000**

• Average post reach: **30,000**

• Average post reactions: **180**

• Average shares: **25**

• Average comments: **75**

LinkedIn:
@Colchester City Council

• Followers: **10,000**

• Average post reach: **2,200**

• Average post reactions: **50**

• Average shares: **2**

• Average comments: **5**

Instagram:
@ColchesterCityCouncil

• Followers: **5,000**

• Average post reach: **1,000**

• Average post reactions: **50**

• Average shares: **2**

• Average comments: **5**

X (formerly Twitter):
@ColchesterCityCouncil

• Followers: **maintain at 17,358**

• Average post reach: **maintain at 853**

• Average post reactions: **maintain at 9**

• Average shares/reposts: **maintain at 2**

• Average comments: **maintain at 1**

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SMART Objectives

S — SPECIFIC

- Grow Facebook and Instagram followers and reach by 25% or more.
- Grow LinkedIn following and engagement by 40% or more.
- Maintain our following and reach on X at current levels.

M — MEASURABLE

- Follower count on each platform.
- Reach per post.
- Monthly reach per platform.
- Likes, comments, shares.
- Monitor type of comments (positive, tags).

A — ACHIEVABLE

- Follower growth can be achieved with just 1% of new audience following.
- Reach can be achieved through shareable content and content strategy.
- Initial steps will see monitoring of insights and continued adapting of content designed to increase reach and achieve objectives.

R — RELEVANT

- The increase in engaged reach means we can utilise social platforms to share messages that meet our communication strategy.
- Our content strategy will increase the relationship with our audience.

T — TIME-BASED

- 3-8% increase in monthly following.
- 2-11% increase in monthly reach.
- 2-4% increase in monthly engagement.
- Content strategy aligned with monthly calendar.

ⓕ Facebook

Social media analysis

Currently, Facebook is our far-reaching and most engaged account by some distance. Our audience responds well to authentic, relatable content that focuses on Colchester. We create content designed to engage residents and encourage sharing. This includes positive news, heart-warming stories, local events, and exciting upcoming developments in our city.

We are building an engaged community that regularly interacts with our posts. Initially, balancing engaging content with strategic messaging — which typically wouldn't capture our audience's attention — was challenging. However, we have recently succeeded in increasing our engaged audience while building trust and authenticity, ensuring even less engaging posts still reach them.

A balanced and effective content plan helps us avoid overwhelming our audience with less engaging posts, which could negatively impact our account's algorithm.

Our primary audience on Facebook consists of 30 to 55-year-olds living within a 50-mile radius of Colchester. They have an interest in Colchester and want to see it improve. This diverse audience ranges from families to older single users, so our content needs to be broad enough to reach as many people as possible.

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◉ Instagram

Social media analysis

Our Instagram account reaches a younger demographic compared to Facebook. While Instagram has significant potential, our identity as a Council can limit our appeal to its core users.

Unlike Facebook, which emphasises text and storytelling, Instagram and its audience focus on images and videos rather than text or captions. Unlikely stories with engaging images can perform well, while larger stories without strong visuals often struggle.

Creating content that resonates with our Instagram audience and aligns with the platform's algorithm, particularly Instagram Reels, can be more time-consuming than creating content for Facebook. This often means content is not fully utilised, and our account does not grow to its full potential.

Currently, the content that performs best on Instagram includes image carousels on a variety of subjects, largely driven by the quality of images. Our primary audience on Instagram is 25 to 35-year-olds living in and around Colchester, although our reach sometimes extends further than it does on Facebook. They have an interest in local development and changes that will affect them.

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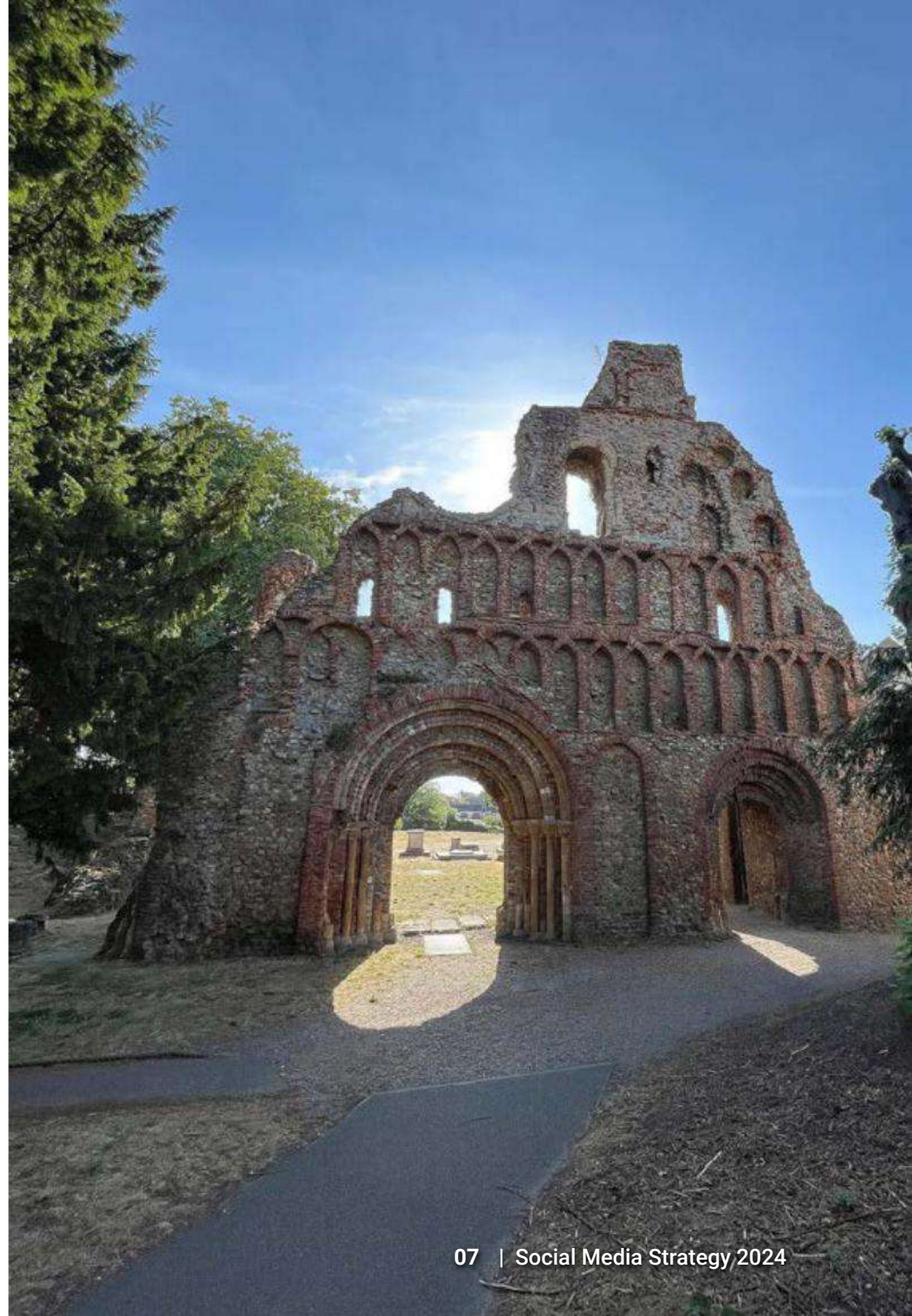
LinkedIn

Social media analysis

LinkedIn is our best platform for reaching a professional audience, including stakeholders and partners. Our content strategy needs to be different to our other platforms, using a mix of images and videos that highlight various topics in Colchester.

Content that performs well on LinkedIn focuses on business, projects, plans, changes, and developments in Colchester. Stories, community-focused posts, and a relaxed style, tend to perform poorly. Our tone of voice and approach should be more professional, aiming to connect with key partners and share messages aligned with our strategic plan.

Local events that do not emphasise positive changes or developments in Colchester are less effective. For example, when discussing an event like Ride London 2023, we should highlight its positive impact on local businesses rather than framing it as just a 'cool' spectacle or fun day out, as we might on Facebook.

Unlike other platforms where we analyse audience demographics based on age and gender, LinkedIn's analytics focus more on job function/role, company size, and industry. Our largest following comes from individuals in business development, followed by operations and sales. Our followers include people from small, medium, and large companies, with a significant portion working for government organisations or in business development.

We need to keep this in mind when creating content to suit this audience. We are not engaging in the same way we would with residents. While the topics we discuss may be similar, our approach should differ. Our main audience on LinkedIn consists of people who work in Colchester or have a connection to the city's progression and development.

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⊗ X (Formerly Twitter)

Social media analysis

Our X account has over 16,000 followers, but this figure doesn't tell the whole story. A significant percentage of the accounts following us are unengaged, inactive, unused, or likely 'bot' accounts. X is currently a platform in flux, having recently relaxed its post moderation and made other changes, leading many users to abandon the platform or significantly reduce their activity. Major advertisers have also withdrawn.

Although our follower count has remained stable, we have seen a significant drop in our reach. Despite this, X continues to be the best platform for jumping on trends and quickly updating our audience. It remains the favoured platform for many political figures and organisations, making it a useful medium for us. However, we are closely monitoring further developments and anticipate more changes that could affect its viability and suitability for our use.

Our content on X is less focused on images or videos, and more on the subject matter itself. Given the character limit for non-premium accounts, our messages must be concise. More complex messages need to be spread across multiple posts, which are naturally less engaging.

Our main engaged audience on X consists of 30 to 50-year-olds who live and/ or work in Colchester. This group overlaps with our Facebook and LinkedIn followers, making it challenging to strike the right balance of content that appeals to both audiences.

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Audience

Our social media audience and who we are trying to reach

Our social media audiences geographically based in Colchester ranges from around 25% on LinkedIn to around 50% on Facebook, although it should be noted that the geographical area used by these platforms does not necessarily correlate to the local government boundaries, and locations such as Mersea, Wivenhoe and Tiptree are likely not included in these figures.

It is however important to remember our social media is not just aimed at those living in the city but people who are working, studying, visiting, or have other reason to be interested in Colchester as well.

Target Audience
Our target audience varies by platform, as we have mentioned in our platform analysis. Identifying our audience and establishing key details around their social media use and interests assists us in creating content that will reach them and encourage them to engage.

Residents
This is our main audience. They are interested in how their Council tax is spent and anything that may affect their lives. They engage with local events, transformations, and news. The majority of them react positively towards a relaxed tone of voice and a humorous approach.

Businesses
Local businesses/those who have a connection to Colchester and are affected by our Council will have an interest in our social media posts that feature updates and changes that may impact them. From grants and awards to developments and promotion. Our social media posts will also reach businesses and start-ups looking to open in Colchester.

Partners/Stakeholders
While this is not our main audience, they are part of our account's social media reach. With local/national organisations and groups, we work with them to deliver a service to residents, seeing our content and engaging with it on the relevant platform.

Visitors
Our Visit Colchester account targets our tourism element and focuses on a wider geographical reach than our Council accounts. However, while promoting local events, we often engage a similar audience. Among this group include people with family in Colchester and ex-residents who wish to remain in touch with what is happening in the city.

Plan

How are we going to do it?

Our plan to achieve our objectives and goals will focus and build on the following categories:

• Content creation

• Content themes

• Algorithm

• Tone of voice

• Quality over quantity

• Working with services and partners

• Influencers/paid community groups

• Internal/external relationships

• Future plans

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Content Themes

Local Updates and News
Announcements and news stories relevant to life in Colchester and of interest to local residents.

Positive Stories
Heart-warming and positive stories from within Colchester, targeting platform-specific audiences.

City Developments
New and ongoing projects that will change and shape the future of our city. Development news that will interest our target audience, from new public spaces to entertainment spaces both on a small and large scale.

Local Businesses
Promoting local businesses in an engaging way that shows support and helps the business while also offering a helpful insight for our audience.

History and Heritage
Posts that feature our history and showcase the city's heritage in an engaging way. For example, archaeological discoveries/displays or Roman battles/days out.

Community
Engaging posts that focus on community events, change, difference, and highlight the positive impact we have. Local clean-ups and graffiti removals, anything to show the continued care for Colchester.

Key Council Messages
From changes to bin collections, to promotion of active travel and a range of messages in between, there are a often key Council messages that we will want to put out into the world. These are not always suitable for our social media platforms but we will always give them due consideration and look for an engaging angle.

Content Creation

Each platform will need content specific to its audience and algorithm. From image sizes to file formats, we need to ensure we focus on this when creating content.

Content Ideas
We will utilise a wide range of sources to find ideas that we can create content from. Some of these include local news outlets, internal updates/press releases, and Colchester community groups. Alongside finding ideas, we will create our own based on our content themes, ensuring that we post a balanced schedule.

Content Creation
Once we have our platform-specific ideas, we will create the content in a number of ways to suit both the platform and the content of the message.

We will use images and videos as opposed to graphics. Ideally, we would like to use material we have captured ourselves, though this will not always be possible. In such cases, we will ensure we gain permission and credit the owner of the material we use.

The content we use will be eye-catching, bright, and engaging while remaining relevant to the post. In the past, we have used standard images like the Town Hall for simple updates. We should avoid this where possible and always try to get a more relevant image.

Using multiple images to create excitement, engagement, and show more content will increase reach.

For videos, specifically on Instagram, we will use trending audio and on-screen key text.

Type of Content
One thing to remember when creating content is that it should feel authentic, sociable, and not overproduced or too corporate. This is unengaging and will create a disconnect between us and the audience. Therefore, gone are the days of graphics, slow long videos, and photo ops. Our content now encourages audience production, using their photos and videos.

Tone of Voice

As with content, our tone changes across each platform to creatively communicate our message to our target audience while keeping it engaging. For example, Facebook will have a much more relaxed, humorous, and excitable approach compared to LinkedIn.

Facebook
On this platform, we use a very relaxed, excitable tone to catch the audience's attention. We adapt this as needed — for example, we wouldn't be excited on an emotional post. The use of descriptive and emotive language, mixed with emojis, helps a transparent, authentic, and engaging approach.

We will continue using humour, especially when responding to comments, pushing boundaries for a Council, we respond to negative comments in a witty way, which other users appreciate and react positively to.

Our tone largely reflects that of our commenters'. Well-meaning questions receive thoughtful answers, we'll try to join in with jokes, maybe cracking a joke back, and mean-spirited comments may find themselves getting a similarly spirited response. This robust approach encourages positivity, and deters negativity, speculation, and trolling in the comments section.

Instagram
Similar to Facebook, we will use a relaxed tone. However, we target an even younger demographic, using slang and trending content that wouldn't suit the Facebook audience. We will still use emojis, but captions and comments will be much shorter due to lower attention span and watch times on Instagram.

X
Whilst the platform remains in flux, our content will largely echo that of other platforms, until changes in our followers and the platform itself settle down. At that point, we can decide on a clear style and voice that works for us.

LinkedIn
This requires our most professional approach. This doesn't mean that we can't still make it engaging. We aim to create excitement and encourage engagement, but we focus on aspects that appeal to the target audience. For example, instead of promoting the Christmas parade as a fun day out for kids, it will be great for our economy, local businesses, and the progress of our city.

Algorithm

Social media algorithms are sets of rules that rank content (posts) based on how likely a user is to engage with it. Each platform has its own algorithm; though some are more similar than others. There are multiple elements to each, understanding and implementing these algorithms is crucial to our strategy. The key point is that content needs to be engaging and something users would be interested in and want to watch.

Posting Content
We create content and post it on social media. The platform then shows this post to a small number of our most engaged followers – those who like, comment, and engage with our posts the most.

Engagement
If these highly engaged followers interact with a post (like, comment, share, save, etc.) the post platform shows it to the next tier of our most engaged followers. This process continues, gradually expanding the post's reach to even the least engaged followers.

Wider Reach
Once our least engaged followers start to engage with the post, the platform begins to suggest it to 'non-followers.' These are users who share similar social media activity with the users that have already engaged with the post (liking similar posts, locations, etc.). This combined with sharing directly to non-followers is how a post goes 'viral' and how we increase our following.

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How Do We Get Our Posts Seen?

Images

Each platform varies, but the general rule with images is that likes (reactions), comments, and shares are key to achieving higher reach. Therefore, the images we choose are crucial to a post's success, which is why we should no longer use graphics.

Videos

Instagram is currently our best platform for videos that suit the algorithm, particularly through 'Reels'. Whilst platform algorithms change often; Instagram has focused on Reels for the last two years, resulting in higher reach and visibility to non-followers. For video, engagement is crucial, but watch time (length of time a user watches the video – ideally the entirety of it) is more important. Therefore, the content needs a strong hook at the beginning to keep the user engaged throughout (often shorter videos achieve this better).

There are a number of ways to use the algorithm to our advantage, but ultimately it comes down to posting the best, most engaging content we can to the correct target audience.

Time

We will post our content around 30-45 minutes before peak traction begins to build. This will give the algorithm time to gauge the engagement levels and decide who/how many followers it will continue to show it to. For example, our main audience picks up on Facebook during weekdays from 5pm to 9pm; therefore, we want to post at around 4:30pm to ensure that we reach the maximum number of people. The weekend varies — usually around 10am and 4pm are ideal posting times. This differs between platforms and audiences; however, the rule remains the same.

Engagement

To increase engagement, we will comment on our own posts with something in the appropriate tone for that platform to encourage replies and further engagement. In the past, we have discouraged disagreements or disputes in the comments, but if done in the correct way, this can be hugely beneficial. For example, with Facebook, we could post a comment that we know would get mixed feedback, therefore creating engagement.

What To Avoid

If the initial group of our most engaged followers does not engage with a post, then the post is shown to a smaller group of users. If they do not engage, a post can die out reaching a very small number of people. Worse than that, if this happens, our next post is shown to a even smaller audience, making it more difficult to increase reach and engagement, even if the post is good. Multiple posts with low engagement, can very quickly lead to a decline in the overall accounts reached, engagement, and performance. This is why it is crucial to limit the amount of partner/service messages that are unengaging. Sharing these messages is better than posting them, but still harms our accounts.

Planning posts/shares in advance as far as possible will help us combat this, as we can ensure that less engaging posts are spread out, causing the least amount of harm to our accounts.

Quality Over Quantity

More is not always better...

In the past, we posted sometimes four plus times a day, which is far too much. The only platform where this might be acceptable is X, and that is only because of X threads rather than posts.

Each platform's posting schedule will be similar; however, based on the algorithm and audience behaviour, there will be differences.

Posting multiple times a day is ineffective largely due to the algorithm. When we post, the algorithm pushes that content to our followers. If we overlap our posts with more content, the algorithm has to decide which post to show. For example, if we post five times, the algorithm will not show all of these to our followers, as it also has to show content from other accounts our followers follow.

• Posting too often will also result in a loss of followers, as our account may appear as spam. Even when we have a great piece of content, due to multiple uploads that day, it won't get seen.

• We need to focus on quality over quantity. Due to the nature of our content, this will not always be possible, so planning ahead with our content themes will assist with this.

Posting Frequency
Facebook: We will post once a day and twice when we have enough suitable content to make this work. The caveat to this is, if we notice a post performing well and picking up traction, we will move back the next post in order to maximise reach/engagement.

Instagram: Posting five times a week will allow us to reach our audience and remain on their feeds while ensuring we keep the quality of our content high. An ambition is to focus on Reels more, and we may look to post three times a week, as these take a lot longer to create but will reach the same amount of people as five image posts.

LinkedIn: We will post three to five times a week, ensuring content is matched to our audience. If we have more content, we will post this; however, we will never post more than once a day.

X: We will post once a day with a mixture of relevant content and posts aimed at our target audience.

Examples

Facebook: A perfect post combining engaging news, nice pictures and shareable content. Click into the post and you will find information on work our food and animal licensing teams have done to help get the cafe off the ground.

Instagram: The new mural on Red Lion Books was literally made for Instagram. These kind of attractive images perform well on this platform.

Facebook: News about city centre developments always provokes a lively discussion in the comments.

Facebook: An attractive and engaging photo can generate large numbers of likes and reactions. Rainbows always do well!

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Examples

Facebook: Despite an engaging hook and relatively high comments, the unappealing image choice resulted is a low number of likes and reactions.

X: An example of the stagnation on this platform. A hugely successful post on Facebook received little attention on X.

LinkedIn: A post promoting the Council as a workplace, it's partnerships, and of interest to local businesses. This content would not have performed so well on our other platforms.

Working With Services and Partners

As a Council we work closely with our partners and key services. In the past we have agreed to post and promote the majority of them, without fully considering how this affects our social media accounts, performance, and reach.

Going forward we need to work with the services and partners to communicate our strategy and identify if social media is the correct outlet for their message. If the content aligns with our themes and strategy, then we must establish an approach to maximise reach and engagement. Campaigns, messages, and content may only be of interest to a certain audience, so we will choose the relevant platform(s) accordingly.

Our priority is to achieve our goals and objectives on social media whilst working with services and partners. Some campaigns or messaging may not be suitable for our social media accounts, or the content may not be substantial enough. In such cases, other public-facing communication methods, like our newsletters, can be considered.

Wherever possible, content should be posted on the service/partners' social media accounts before being shared to our accounts. This allows us to promote for the additional message through sharing, reducing the negative impact on our account(s) and future posts/messages. This links back to quality over quantity.

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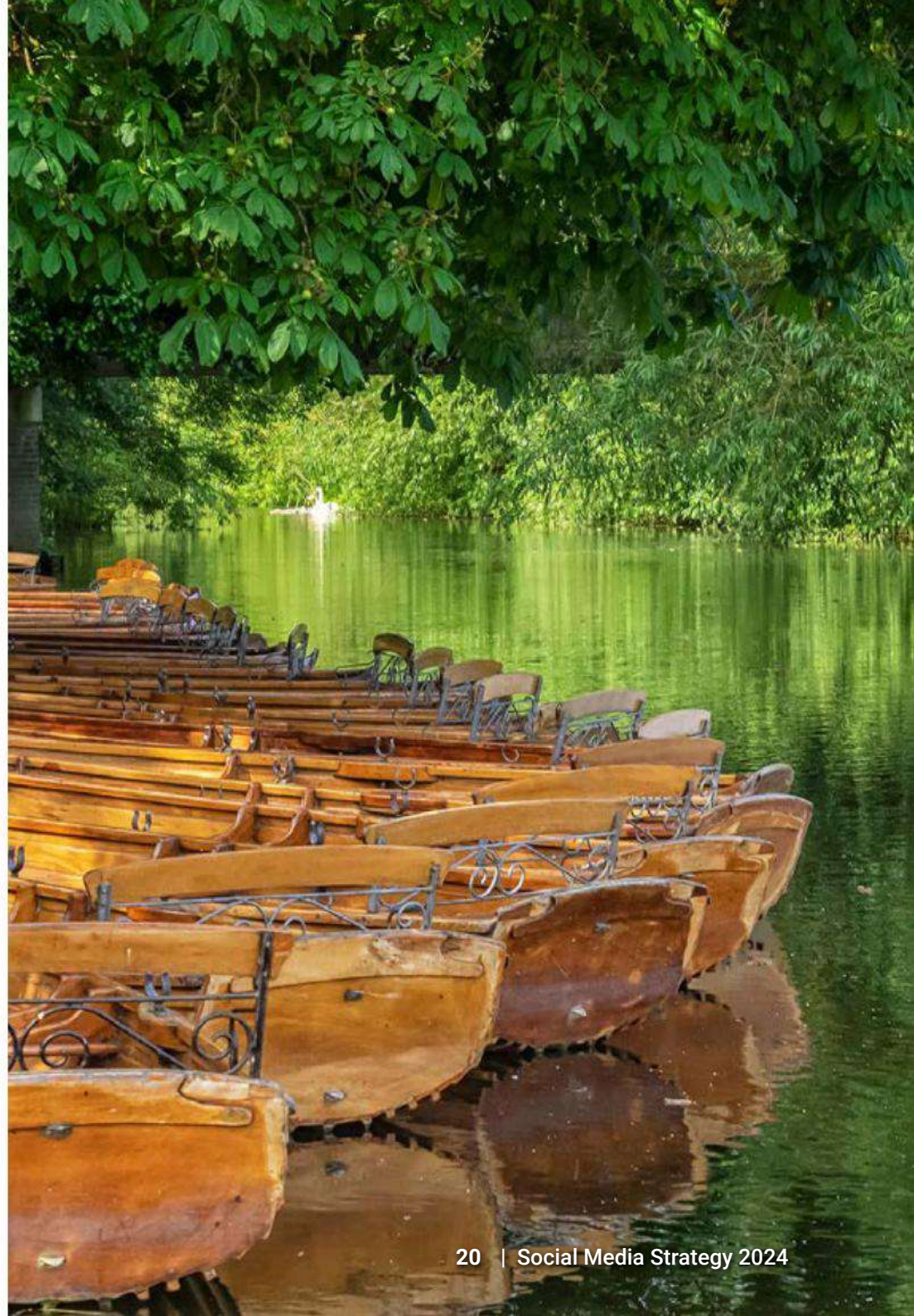
Community Groups

Social media community reach and engagement

Community groups, when used effectively, can be a powerful tool for reaching large audiences and engaging with them authentically. This helps build a transparent and trusting relationship.

Relevant Community Groups:
We should engage with local community groups that align with our target audience. Different groups react differently to the Council posting messages so the appropriateness of any messaging in this style will happen on a case-by-case basis.

Communicating with residents and the community in community groups like this has not previously happened and therefore we will need to adapt our approach as we go, however, we will always remain professional and positive. We will interact, share, and use the community groups at relevant times. The aim of using community groups is to engage a larger audience that may not see our posts or follow us, or to specifically target messages at groups with more niche interests.

How Will We Use the Groups?
We will share our posts that are relevant to the community group, for example, a new park in Mersea will be shared into the Mersea community group.

We will create posts specific to that community group around updates, news, and general engagement. This will allow us to connect with that audience and drive traffic to our account. Our tone and style will be much more relaxed and done in a conversational format.

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Paid Advertising/Influencers

• Conversions • Impressions • Reach • Link clicks • Lead generation • Demographics • Location • Interests • Other profile information.

Paid advertising allows us to target specific demographics. Each platform has its own method of account/profile advertising.

We will look to use paid advertising when the budget allows for this alongside the purpose of promoting the posts/topic/event.

Paid advertising can be performed in a number of ways throughout social media in order to reach the correct audience and achieve the desired results.

When considering the use of paid advertising, we need to align our objectives with the following goals:

• Paid advertising is usually targeted to their users.

• Paid advertising and boosted posts are different. We can create advertising in a number of ways for different platforms, using videos and images for our desired result.

Paid Advertising, Boosting Posts and Using Influencers.
Influencer Social Media Marketing:
There are various ways in which we can use influencers to achieve our objectives.

Influencers are often social media users who have amassed a following of loyal engaged 'fans.' They range from small niche creators to large viral sensations. Due to their authentic, non-Council affiliation these can be a crucial tool in reaching an audience we would otherwise miss, as well as engaging and assisting with an audience who we struggle to influence ourselves.

Often influencers are far more effective than advertising, this is largely based on their value for money. When we pay for advertising we often either pay per click or expected reach/engagement, however, generally speaking, if we put the same amount of money into influencers, we would see better results.

Influencers tend to cost more if they have a larger audience (more following/engagement rate), however, this depends on their niche and audience. We need to be aware of their content and audience when we look to work with them.

Another reason influencers will help us as a Council, particularly, is down to the collaboration based on a complimentary basis. For example, we may be able to offer them free tickets to events in return for content/promotion.

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Paid Advertising

Each social media platform has its own methods for advertising and boosting posts. However, our social media strategy primarily focuses on organic growth, rather than relying on paid methods. We aim to use our marketing budget to support specific campaigns to targeted messages, not to increase followers or engagement for growth's sake.

Facebook/Instagram Advertising
Since Facebook and Instagram are both owned by Meta, we can effectively run and manage the same advertising across both platforms.

• Boosted Posts: Boosting a post involves paying for it to reach a larger audience. This increases the visibility of a post that already exists on our profile.

• Advertising: can be created independently of our profile and inserted directly into users' feeds. These adverts do not appear as posts on our page and disappear after the campaign ends.

Both boosted posts and advertising impact the algorithm. While an unengaging ad might negatively affect our organic reach, the return on investment from well-targeted advertising often outweighs this concern. As our audience grows, understanding the balance between paid advertising and organic reach becomes increasingly important.

When setting up a campaign or boosting a post, we can customise the budget and target audience, and Meta provides estimates of the campaign's reach and potential results. Meta offers eleven marketing objectives, which we need to select based on our goals:

1. Brand Awareness: Introduce the brand to a new audience.

2. Reach: Show the ad to as many people as possible within our target audience.

3. Traffic: Direct users to a website, app, or Facebook Messenger conversation.

4. Engagement: Increase post interactions, page follows, event attendance, or special offer claims.

5. App Installs: Drive app downloads.

6. Video Views: Increase video views.

7. Lead Generation: Collect new sales prospects.

8. Messages: Encourage users to contact the business via Facebook Messenger.

9. Conversions: Prompt a specific action, such as a subscription or purchase.

10. Catalogue Sales: Promote products from a catalogue based on users' interests.

11. Store Traffic: Drive foot traffic to physical store or location.

LinkedIn and X Advertising
While LinkedIn and X also offer advertising options, we use them much less frequently. They remain available for ad-hoc campaigns but are not a regular part of our current marketing strategy.

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The Future

Moving forward, we will continue to work with this strategy whilst remaining flexible and adapting it as necessary. We have established clear goals and objectives, which we are already progressing toward.

From September 2022 to the present day, we've seen significant growth in reach, engagement, following, and a generally more positive sentiment from residents. However, our growth potential is limited by both time and budget, as well as the finite audience interested in following Colchester City Council, regardless of how engaging our content becomes.

In the future, our long-term goal should be to reach as many people in Colchester as possible. We aim for the majority of residents that use social media to see our content.

Accounts and Team
Currently, we have one social media officer who creates, posts, and manages our corporate social media accounts. To progress our accounts and reach our long-term goals, employing additional team members in a social media role will be essential.

With the right skill set and training, we can become one of the most engaged and highest-reaching Councils on social media in the country.

Once we have a larger team in place, we can look to create accounts on additional platforms such as TikTok, which was the fastest-growing app across 2022/23 and now has a larger user base than Instagram. TikTok will reach a younger demographic that we struggle to engage with, and it will give us the greatest chance of reaching a much larger audience due to its viral potential with each post.

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Internal

In the past, we have received content to post on our social media accounts that may not be engaging, relevant, or suitable for certain platforms, or even for social media at all.

While it is important to work with our teams and services to promote their campaigns, we want their messages to reach the highest number of people in Colchester. We must be selective and collaborate with our teams and services around this strategy, their messages and campaigns may go unseen and could potentially harm our account.

Some content may not be relevant for social media, but the topic could be. For example, a post about air pollution may perform poorly, but if the team providing the content could find a case study of someone in Colchester suffering ill health due to air pollution from idling cars outside their homes, that would be a more engaging route to take.

Internal Social Media Approach
In order to maximise the reach, engagement, and effectiveness of our teams and services' messages, we will share this strategy with them and conduct masterclasses with relevant teams (questions and queries around content can be directed to our social media inbox).

In the long run, we aim for all teams and relevant areas who wish to use our social media platforms to have a good understanding of what we post and why.

Another internal avenue is to create better dialogue and sharing of communication, from good news stories and positive changes to business developments and pride in our work. This will allow us to create content based on all the hard work going on that we usually do not hear about. We will create a group email that we send out every month asking for any content that staff members may have.

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External

Our external collaboration currently extends to tagging and mentioning partner accounts, such as InColchester and VisitColchester. We have the potential to share audiences, increase following, and boost engagement for both our and our partners' accounts, while also creating engagement chains (comments and replies interacting with each other to create discussions and further engagement from residents and the community).

Collaborating With Other Social Media Accounts
Engaging with other social media accounts can significantly expand our reach and attract new followers. By interacting with other Councils, pages, and community groups, we can enhance visibility and work toward our objectives. For instance, when we exchange humorous posts with Braintree Council, their playful response helps us gain new followers, demonstrating the power of collaboration in boosting engagement and reach.

Accessibility, Equality and Diversity

Colchester has a diverse community, and it is crucial that our social media content is accessible and understandable for all. This means using imagery that reflects the diversity within our city, including race, gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation. We will also work to implement more translated materials in our communications.

We will create content that allows people with visual, hearing, speech, motor, cognitive, or other impairments to engage with our content.

This will be an ongoing challenge as new platforms and technologies emerge, and we will need to adapt as people's needs change. We may not get it 100% right every time, but through ongoing training and development, we will make a commitment to adopting good habits and following emerging best practices.

To ensure our social media messages are resonating with our audience, people need to see themselves represented and celebrated in our content. We are committed to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into all our social media campaigns.

We Will Do This By:

- Applying best practices on font sizes and colour contrast when designing video captions.

- Text to ensure any important information in an image is described in alternative text for visually impaired users.

- Working closely with our studio to ensure any creative products designed for social media campaigns meet accessibility guidelines.

- Using plain English, simplifying messages, and keeping sentences as short as possible.

- Avoiding large chunks of text and using line breaks in our social media posts to spread out the copy and make it easier to read.

- Avoiding the use of bold, italicised, or capitalised text in our posts, as this can make them harder to read.

- Avoiding using non-standard symbols, such as mathematical symbols, as substitutes for words and messages, as these can confuse screen-reading software.

Evaluation

We will track the following metrics monthly:

- Followers
- Average post reach
- Average post reactions
- Link click conversion rate
- Average shares
- Average comments

Evaluation is vital to demonstrate the value and impact of our work in Communications, and the same thinking needs to be applied to our social media campaigns. Social media is fast-paced and reactive, but we need to take the time to pause and reflect on our outputs to ensure they are meeting the objectives of this strategy as well as our overall communications and organisational objectives.

To do this, we will monitor and analyse the following:

- Positive conversations we've had and their outcomes.
- Resolution of issues, both in the social media inbox and publicly.
- Residents' attitudes and their feelings about us.
- Direct actions as a result of social content – link clicks, sign-ups, etc.
- Content highlights – what worked, what didn't, and why.
- Competitor analysis – what have our counterparts done well or not so well that month?

- Who has been talking about us and what they have been saying – informed by social listening.
- How we have worked with members, Council teams, and colleagues.
- How we have supported partners and how they have supported us.
- How we have worked with influencers and UGC creators.
- How we have worked with closed community groups.
- Investment and impact of paid activity.

While metrics are important, they only tell us so much. We also need to be aware of the overall impression, influence, and effect our social media has on residents and the Council.

As part of our ongoing strategy, we will continually evaluate, analyse, and adapt our social media approach to ensure it remains effective and aligned with our goals.

Glossary

- **Algorithm** – The set of rules that social media platforms use to determine how content is displayed to users based on their engagement and behaviour.

- **Audience Engagement** – The process of interacting with and responding to an audience's actions, such as likes, comments, and shares on social media.

- **Brand Awareness** – The degree of consumer recognition of a brand, achieved through consistent and targeted social media efforts.

- **Boosted Posts** – Social media posts that are promoted through paid advertising to reach a larger audience beyond organic followers.

- **Call to Action (CTA)** – A prompt on social media posts that encourages the audience to take a specific action, such as clicking a link, sharing, or commenting.

- **Comments** – The number of responses or replies to your post.

- **Content Creation** – The process of generating ideas and producing text, images, and videos for social media posts tailored to each platform's audience.

- **Content Themes** – Categories of content that are aligned with the strategic messaging, such as local updates, positive stories, or city developments.

- **Conversion Rate** – The percentage of users who take a desired action (e.g. clicking a link or making a purchase) after engaging with social media content.

- **Engagement Rate** – A metric that tracks the amount of interaction (likes, shares, comments) a social media post receives relative to its reach.

- **Followers** – The number of users who have chosen to subscribe to your profile to receive updates and content.

- **Influencers** – Individuals or entities with a significant following on social media who can affect the opinions or behaviours of their audience through posts and collaborations.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** – Metrics used to evaluate the success of social media campaigns, including followers, reach, reactions, and link clicks.

- **Likes** – The number of users who have clicked the 'like' button on your post.

- **Organic Reach** – The number of unique users who see your content without paid promotion.

- **Organic Growth** – The increase in followers, engagement, or reach without paid advertising, achieved through consistent and authentic content.

- **Paid Reach** – The number of unique users who see your content as a result of paid promotion.

- **Reach** – The total number of unique users who have seen a social media post.

- **Reels** – Short, engaging videos used on platforms like Instagram to increase reach and engagement, particularly popular for storytelling.

- **Shares** – The number of times your content has been shared by users to their own profiles or with others.

- **Target Audience** – A specific group of people identified as the intended recipients of social media content based on demographic and behavioural data.

- **Tone of Voice** – The distinct personality, style, or attitude expressed through communication on social media.

- **Trending Content** – Posts or topics that are currently popular on social media and widely shared or discussed by users.

- **User-Generated Content (UGC)** – Content created and shared by users, such as photos or reviews, that is often reposted by the brand for authenticity.

- **Viral Content** – Social media posts that gain significant exposure by being widely shared beyond the original audience.

- **Visual Storytelling** – The use of imagery and videos to convey a message or narrative on platforms like Instagram and Facebook.