Report of: Shaid Mahmood, West North West Area Leader

Report to: Outer North West Community Committee

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Date: 13th October 2014   **For decision**

Facebook

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Facebook and how and why community committees could use it as a communication tool to help engage with local residents.

Main issues

What is Facebook?
Facebook is the world's largest social networking site and allows users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages, and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues and connect with groups and organisations they are interested in.

Why do we want community committees to use Facebook?
Facebook will allow our community committees to connect with a wider audience. It is a useful tool to develop two-way communications and build a stronger social connection with residents who normally wouldn't engage with us.

It will help community committees build relationships and show support by sharing useful and interesting information from local media, community groups and residents. It has the added benefit of supporting and encouraging citizenship.

It provides a free communications channel allowing community committees to talk to many people at no cost. Without paying for anything, we can see via Facebook exactly the number of people and their age, gender and interests in the areas we serve and how people respond and interact with our posts.

Aims of using Facebook:
- Promote the work of the community committee
- Enhance existing work by involving local people
- Promote opportunities to residents and community groups e.g. funding, training, events

Benefits for the community committee
- Increase the visibility and enhance the identity of community committees
- Develop a greater understanding within communities of the role and work of the community committee including projects funded through the Wellbeing Fund and Youth Activities fund.
- Increase awareness and understanding within communities of the role and services offered by the Area Support Team, Leeds City Council and partners
- Allow the team to have a further means of communicating decision making in a transparent and user friendly way.
- Allow the team to have a further means of consulting with communities/involving residents in designing local services.

How are other community committees using Facebook?

The other community committees are using Facebook to communicate the following messages:

- Advertising committee meetings
- Promoting local community events such as fair's, gala's and fun day's
- Promoting community forum meetings
- Posting agreed funding applications and skips
- Promoting Wellbeing and YAF funding
- Sharing and liking local groups and information
- Sharing and liking other council services including the corporate page.

The pages are doing well with increasing number of followers on a weekly basis and have received no negative responses. There have been some issues raised for example around venues or the timing of meetings however these have been addressed. There has also been comment and debate on the Leeds cycle super-highway.

Examples of the type of posts and interaction by other community committees are attached as an appendix.

Facebook and community engagement

What is community engagement? It is giving people access to information and the chance to have a greater say and influence over what happens in their community and the services they use.

There is often a perceived 'usual suspect' group that dominates local engagement with the audience being between the ages of 50-74. Facebook is allowing us to engage with a different audience, a younger audience who are usually busy working, looking after children and who don't generally have the time to attend council meetings/events. Facebook is

helping us to reach an audience between the ages of 25-54. This audience are using our community committee pages to find out local information and news and provide a platform for them to talk about where they live, in their own time – on their phones, at work, or in the comfort of their homes.

Below provides information on current engagement our community committee pages are experiencing.

Data taken from Facebook for the period 17/09/14 – 23/09/17

Committee	Number of page 'Likes'	Audience Age	Number of people Reached
Inner South	108	35-44	488
Inner West	93	35-54	718
Inner East	69	35-44	51
Inner North West	86	25-34	456
Inner North East	73	35-44	409
Outer South	72	25-44	178
Outer East	171	35-44	986
Outer West	124	35-44	181

How will Facebook be managed by the Area Support Team?
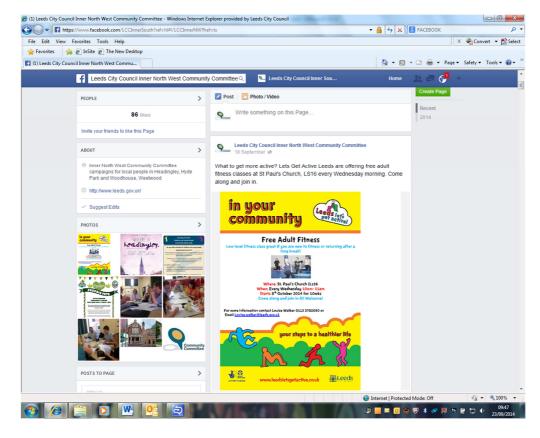
We will ensure that:
- Pages are checked at least once a day
- We are polite, open and respectful
- We direct all service enquiries to the relevant service areas within the Council for them to respond to.
- Questions or comments on behalf of a service or organisation are responded to in a timely and informative manner.
- What is said online is consistent with other communications
- We won't enter into unnecessary debates
- The Facebook pages are owned by the Community Committee and are serviced by the Area Support Team. Members will not have individual Facebook profiles as part of the community committee.
- We are happy for any posts to be public knowledge. Only posting comments, videos and pictures which we are happy to share.
- Where appropriate, responses can be made away from an open forum; either to their personal email address or over the phone.
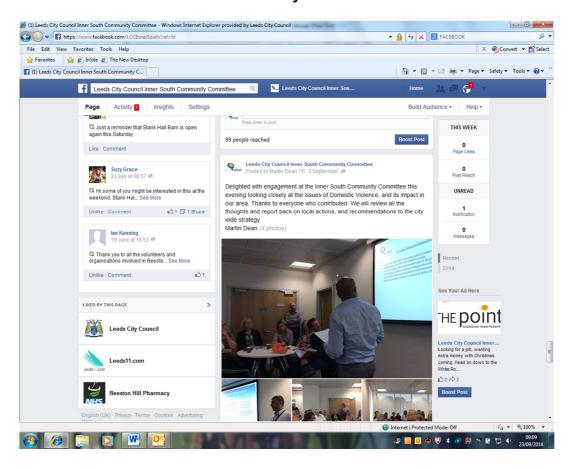
Recommendations

Outer North West Community Committee are asked to consider and comment on the use of Facebook to connect and share information with a wider audience.
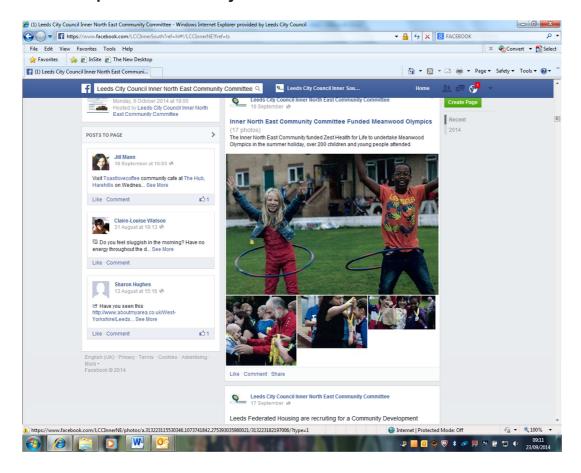
Examples of posts by the other community committees

Inner West – posted information about free adult fitness classes

Inner South – Posted live at their community committee event

Inner North East posted details of youth activities fund

Outer East posted information responding to issues raised by local residents.