

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 1 April 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Social Media channel approach for EDDC

### Report summary:

East Devon District Council's communications approach is shaped by its statutory responsibilities to inform, consult, and engage with residents, partners, and businesses. The council must ensure that all publicity remains lawful, objective, cost-effective and politically neutral, while also providing transparent access to information that enables public understanding and scrutiny of local decision-making. Social media plays a central role in delivering timely, accessible communication, particularly during emergencies, and supports the council's duty to reach audiences "where they are." The Corporate Communications team continuously monitors platform performance and sector trends to ensure channels align with both audience needs and organisational requirements.

The council currently operates across five platforms, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X and YouTube, each serving distinct audiences and functions. Following recent concerns raised by members around our use of X, this report maps out the channel approach taken by the authority and proposals for regular reporting to cabinet.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That Cabinet notes the content of the report

### Reason for recommendation:

The report recommends maintaining the existing channel strategy, increasing investment in video capability and training, and continuing to monitor analytical data and industry developments, with bi-annual reporting to Cabinet.

Officer: Chloe Woodman, [chloe.woodman@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:chloe.woodman@eastdevon.gov.uk)

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Assets and Economy
- Communications and Democracy
- Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- Environment - Nature and Climate
- Environment - Operational
- Finance

- Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

## **Climate change** Low

**Risk:** Low Risk;

### **Links to background information**

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- A supported and engaged community
  - Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
  - Resilient economy that supports local business
  - Financially secure and improving quality of services
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## **Report in full**

Our responsibilities to Communicate:

### **1) To provide information to the public**

To ensure transparency, accountability and compliance. Our audiences include residents, partners, businesses and other stakeholders. This includes being a trusted source of fact among mis/dis/mal information and ensuring that our communications are accessible to all. It is particularly important in emergency situations.

### **2) Compliance with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity**

This statutory Code governs how councils may communicate, especially regarding publicity. Councils must ensure publicity is:

- Lawful
- Cost-effective
- Objective
- Even-handed
- Appropriate during periods of heightened political sensitivity (e.g., pre-election periods)
- Compliant with equality duties

The points about remaining “objective” and “even handed” relates to the channels that we use as well as the content. It is our responsibility to be platform agnostic – we do not make political or ethical decisions in which newspapers we gain coverage from, for example. What matters is ensuring the delivery of council messages to those that they need to reach. It is our job to reach audiences “where they are” both on and offline.

### **3) Duties to engage and consult on local decision making**

We have a responsibility to consult and engage with residents – which again makes it important that we utilise the channels and technologies which will reach them

### **4) Duties to engage and consult on local decision making**

The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 clarify executive and non-executive functions. While not communication-specific, they underpin decision-making processes that require publication of reports, notices and decisions so the public

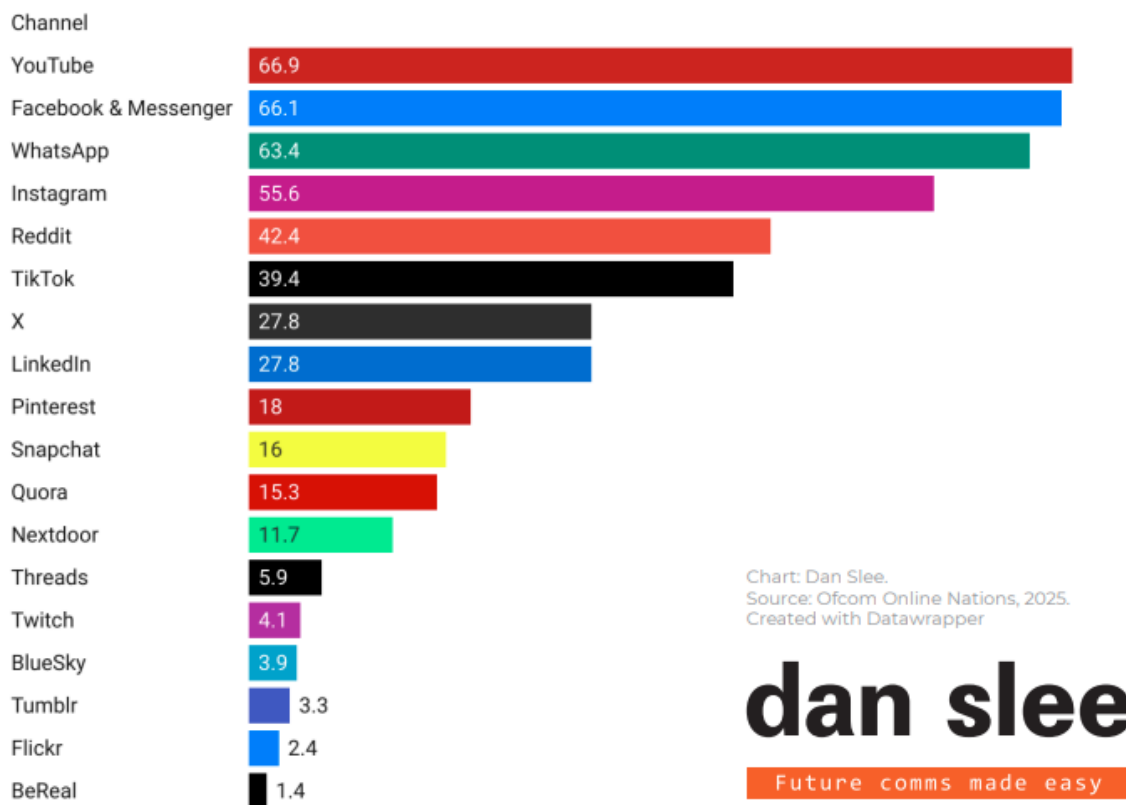
can understand and scrutinise council decisions. This means councils must: publish agendas and minutes, make decisions and supporting information available, provide public access to democratic processes

## Social Media

The social media landscape is an ever evolving one. The corporate communications team is therefore always monitoring, evaluating and learning both the channels that we use and the content that performs well on each of them.

A current assessment of social media use can be seen below. We take this and other trend information and overlay it with the needs of our audience, and the needs of the organisation to inform which platforms we use.

Percentage of the UK population aged 18 and above who have used a particular channel in the previous month. Source: Ofcom, 2025.



We can broadly categorise our content into three core pillars:

**Inform** – to provide clear public messaging about council business, to let residents know when they need to act or to update on key developments across our BAU and project work.

**Engage** – not only in the traditional sense of engagement and consultation but also to build our audiences by celebrating and representing East Devon so they are with us when we need to deliver critical communication, to develop a two-way communication between us and our residents is vital and is why our customer services team are embedded in our management of incoming enquiries

**Share** – we are part of a public service ecosystem alongside our blue light services, voluntary sector, charity partners, town and parish councils etc. Being able to share and uplift messaging means that we can all retain ownership of our message, which provides clarity to residents, whilst enabling us to reach our crossover audiences.

**Channels – what we use and their benefits**

We currently utilise five social media channels: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and X.

East Devon District Council social media  
(January 1 – December 31 2025 vs 2024)

	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	X	YouTube* (*uses different metrics)
<b>Followers</b> (change in followers over time period in brackets)	13,246 (+1,596)	2,481 (+143)	4,228 (+939)	9,307 (-176)	Subscribers = 1.07k
<b>Post impressions</b> (number of times posts have appeared in users' feeds)	5,590,669 (+3,560,748)	75,609 (+42,886)	164,202 (+68,781)	32,144 (-45,119)	
<b>Total published posts over time period</b>	576 (+77)	144 (+64)	214 (+63)	181 (-76)	

### Facebook

The key Facebook audience is most reflective of the largest demographic in East Devon, the over 55s. This is reflected in it being our largest follower count across all platforms. News and locally focussed content perform well. Content is delivered via an algorithm based on the pages that users engage with, not necessarily in a chronological timeline.

### Instagram

This is the second "Meta" (Facebook's parent company) channel that we use. The audience is younger, largely used by the 25 – 45 market. Video content will be optimised and performs well. This platform is also driven by algorithms, not timeline.

### LinkedIn

This platform has a very specific audience used, professionals across a range of industries. We use the platform to post recruitment messaging and also when we need to engage with our business community, for example if we are promoting the Enterprise Zone.

### X

X has a benefit as a mainly news-based, time-bound channel. We use it sparingly and only when we need coverage for emergency situations or to uplift messaging from partners such as DevonAlert (traffic incidents) or the Met Office (weather events). Engagement peaks for emergency communication and we do not put any advertising spend toward this platform.

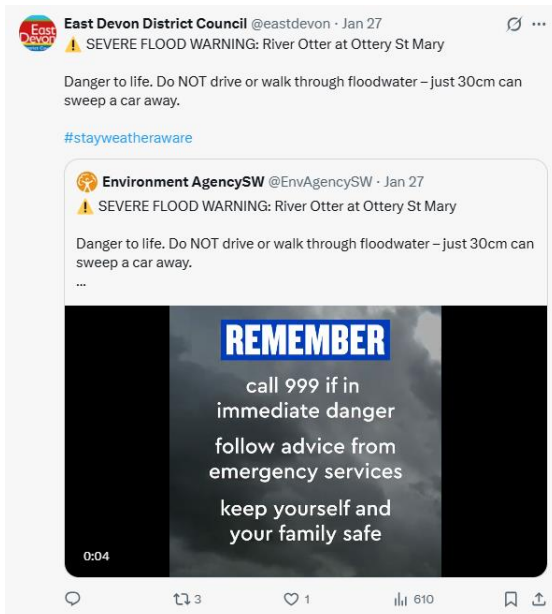
### YouTube

YouTube which is an under-utilised platform in our arsenal and is primarily used for delivering our function of enabling access to the democratic process. However, there is a need for us to better equipped to deliver video content, which is a development area for the communications team.

### Wider Considerations

There is an ongoing Ofcom investigation of X under the online safety act, instigated by an AI chatbot being used to share deep fake pornographic images. X has taken mitigating actions to their safety protocols as a result and the Ofcom investigation is ongoing. We will remain attuned to this concern and will respond as necessary.

We use X for time limited, safety information – this allows us to maximise for penetration of message when we are in emergency situations or where we have a duty to ensure that our message reaches a wider audience (EG recruitment).



Many of our partner services (Blue Light, Devon Alert, neighbouring authorities) are also sharing time-critical information in this way. Remaining on X allows us to uplift those messages (EG Budleigh Sea swim).

Our current channel strategy is mirrored by our district and County councils locally, as well as many of our public sector partner organisations. We commit to keeping this under constant review and to reporting our engagement statistics and any related actions to cabinet on a bi-annual basis.

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### **Financial implications:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to add to the report.