

## Social Media Strategy – Burgess Hill Town Council

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with updated information on the current status of the Social Media approach at the Town Council, with information on nearby local councils. The report proposes a clear strategy for the way forward which in summary is

- To continue to promote the activities and projects of the Town Council with a focus on good news/positive stories about the town.
- To share good news and positive stories in the town promoting activities of other community groups.
- To focus on the Burgess Hill Town Council social media presence only and to encourage councillors and community groups to share events on our behalf, rather than spend additional resourcing managing other pages. The Town Council will only post on own pages rather than interact on other pages available to ensure one consistent message delivered.

### What's working, and what's not?

- Positivity – posts about community projects, improvements to the town, photos of nature in the town - tends to get well shared and have a good level of engagement.
- Video content, including live video, gets a large reach and good level of shares.
- Image based content is working well.
- Informative posts, such as information on road works, improvement works in the town, get a wide reach, which is meeting our goals of keeping residents informed.
- Posts looking for active engagement – e.g asking for people to send in photos – have not always been responded to as well as we have hoped.

### Who is engaging with us?

- People wanting to find out information on things in the town, eg. Roadworks, footpath works.
- Beneficiaries of projects, for example attendees at events, relatives of those that have had photos taken.
- Negative commenters – a few people who are critical of the Town Council.

## Statistics and Comparisons – figures as at September 2021 and at January 2026 visible

Followers:

	Facebook		X (formally Twitter)		Instagram	
	28 Sept 21	9 Jan 25	28 Sept 21	9 Jan 25	28 Sept 21	9 Jan 25
<b>Burgess Hill Town Council</b>	2683	5191	977	1127	1066	1624
<b>East Grinstead Town Council (EGTC)</b>	1706	4.3K	3227	3183	893	1457
<b>Haywards Heath Town Council (HHTC)</b>	2170	4.4K	1701	No longer use X	149	220

<b>Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC)</b>	6985	9.7K	4949	5275	1523	2506
<b>West Sussex County Council (WSCC)</b>	17298	23k	50,400	48605	3139	5186

**Likes are no longer available to view on Facebook, but as of 28 September 2021 were:**

Burgess Hill Town Council: 2071  
 East Grinstead Town Council (EGTC): 1316  
 Haywards Heath Town Council (HHTC): 1745  
 Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC): 5734  
 West Sussex County Council (WSCC): 14166

According to the Sustainable Economy Strategy District Profile 2025 – 2028, Burgess Hill has a population of 33,400 (assessed in 2024). Population information can be found on page 5 of the document: [www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/uw4bjumv/sustainable-economy-strategy-district-profile-2025-2028.pdf](http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/uw4bjumv/sustainable-economy-strategy-district-profile-2025-2028.pdf)

Looking at Burgess Hill Town Council’s numbers in isolation, we can see that Facebook is our largest platform, followed by Instagram, then X. The numbers of Instagram followers have grown at a faster rate than the other platforms, our follower count there has only recently surpassed Twitter. It is worth noting that our post frequency is lower on Instagram than Twitter and Facebook, due to Instagram requiring a specific sized graphic, often not supplied by external event organisers.

HHTC and EGTC are useful to compare to, as they are our equivalents. MSDC and WSCC are not directly comparable, as they have a much wider catchment of residents and therefore higher numbers, however it is useful to see which platforms are most successful for them. WSCC and MSDC are larger organisations, so also have more resources to spend on social media, particularly staff time.

Recommendation:

Burgess Hill Town Council no longer engages on X (formerly Twitter) due to least number of views and the inability to access analytical data. The limited word count on X, also does not allow sufficient written information to be shared, relying the on graphics to share the information, which in turn often makes posts inaccessible for those using screen readers.

## **Resources and Social Media Management Software**

The Community Engagement team (CET) all have access to social media as does the CEO. There will be three Events, Communications and Administrative Officers (from April 2026, currently two as at January 2026), and a Head of Community Engagement. The social media is monitored between the hours of 9am-5pm Monday – Thursday and 9am -4.30pm on Friday. The amount of time resource available to be spent on social media varies depending on workload at the time, however Meta Suite is checked daily as part of the morning procedures to check for comments, and it is generally open throughout the day on at least one officer computer to monitor comments received.

The team source and produces a significant amount of the content, including photography, video and graphics. Content is also submitted by other officers to be shared in the Council team. There has been a shift. During 2022 the volume of requests from external groups and organisations increased with CET expected to

write the copy potentially with one poster provided. The team updated the 'Advise us of an Event/Add me to your Website' button on main website which prompted groups to provide proper supporting wording, written in the third person and updated the graphics accepted. This has helped reduce the time spent creating social media supporting wording to posts, as well as changing the format of graphics and we encourage submission via this channel in all instances.

The CET also monitor some external pages, including those of MSDC and WSCC for content to be shared. Re sharing of posts is not always effective from reach statistics but is helpful for followers to understand who has communicated a message. Monitoring other organisation's usage more closely and widely would require more time but all the CET generally monitor social media to identify any significant issues in the town and this does happen outside operational hours.

There is no dedicated social media budget for boosting posts and if it is deemed necessary then this would be paid from the relevant budget of the department requiring the boost. However, evidence has shown that paying to boost post is often ineffective.

The main tool to plan our social media across the week is Buffer which allows for streamlined posting across all platforms, and scheduling of posts across all platforms. This is particularly beneficial for covering leave, as posts can be scheduled in for this time, and cover will just be needed for checking the inboxes, and posting any additional content that comes up during the time. The annual package cost for this is £137.06. Canva packages costs enable the graphic content to be created used on the social media and website and the costs of these are £129.90.

## External Pages

There are a number of Burgess Hill focussed external pages, such as Burgess Hill Advertising and Gossip; Burgess Hill Gossip; Burgess Hill Alive and Burgess Hill Uncovered. It has been suggested to post on these external pages, however the team felt in 2021 and the view is now, this was not appropriate for the following reasons:

- It would be very time consuming to post on the groups and then have to monitor/reply to these, in addition to our page.
- For some of these groups you have to post as an individual, rather than as a page so this would not be appropriate for an officer to post under their own name.
- The groups have a large amount of content posted daily, mainly advertising for local businesses, anything we did post on there could have the potential to get lost.
- If we want to increase our reach we have the option of boosting posts, which was an effective way to reach people who may not otherwise have seen them
- The possibility of people picking an argument and issues snowballing.

## Our Audience

We have a wide audience, as our pages are aimed at all residents of Burgess Hill. Therefore, our content needs to be widely accessible and understandable. Our main age group on Facebook is females aged 35-40, with over 25% falling into the category. This is closely followed by females aged 45-54, at 18%.

## Frequency and type of content

Currently we post primarily on Facebook and Instagram secondary. Instagram requires a specific graphic size that is not always provided by external groups. The aim is to schedule a maximum of three posts per day during weekdays. We post less frequently on Instagram, and in the past, this has not been that regular. Buffer enables a streamlined process of posting across different platforms. This also means posts on weekends and

evenings can be done where appropriate, although comments on out of hours posts will not be seen/responded to until the next working day. Only content that is important/relevant is posted, so that this content is not lost within higher quantities of less relevant content.

## Facebook

Facebook is our largest platform and is our most important method of informing Burgess Hill residents of local updates, events, news and information. All formats of post can be used – text, image, video, and links – as appropriate. Our level of engagement – comments, shares, direct messages – is highest on Facebook. For events that are a collaboration event pages will be set up but general focus is to update the main page.

We have successfully used live streaming to promote events, for example, live streaming of the Summer Fayre parade, which was used to encourage people to visit during the day, and highlight what activities were on. It was also successfully used at It's Christmas in Burgess Hill! 2025, and the Remembrance services in since 2019, which enabled people who were not able to visit in person to still see these events.

Types of post:

- Notice and publicity of our events
- Event pages
- Notice of meetings
- Local consultations
- Local events - e.g WSCC or MSDC events
- Information on road closures, flooding, traffic incidents
- News - our press releases, photographs of projects
- Live streams of events

## Instagram

Instagram is an image based platform, so we use it for sharing photos from events and projects, photos of Burgess Hill, posters for events and projects. We do not use it as a point of information in the same way as Facebook and Twitter. The aim for our Instagram page is to highlight the Town Council's community work and build a positive image of Burgess Hill. Instagram has been a focus over the last few months, with the use of Instagram Stories particularly built on. Requests have been sent out to staff for images to be sent with items for social media to the officer, to increase the amount of posts suitable to be shared to Instagram.

Types of post:

- Posters for events and projects
- Photos and videos from events and projects
- Stories - live on event days

## X formerly Twitter

X is a dynamic microblogging platform, allowing concise posts of up to 280 characters, which is a go-to space for real-time information. We are now unable to review analytics on this platform and usage has significantly decreased with no comments from public as a result of this.

Types of post:

- Notice and publicity of BHTC events
- Notice of BHTC meetings
- Local consultations
- Local events - e.g WSCC or MSDC events
- Information on road closures, flooding, traffic incidents
- News - our press releases, photographs of projects

## Blogs

Historically we also ran a Mayor's Blog, this was hosted on Tumblr, and posted as a PDF on our website, updated by the officer with post content provided by the Mayor. This was inactive during 2020 and 2021,

partly due to a lack of Mayor's Engagements. The blog did not have a large reach or engagement level, with 14 followers on Tumblr. The lack of regular posting also limited the success of the blog, as people will not follow if there is not frequent content. In 2021-2022 the then current Mayor set up a 'Burgess Hill Mayor' on Facebook. The Mayor had direct access this to post, which reduced officer time. The last post on this was May 2022 and subsequent Mayors have not actively requested to run their own page. The Town Council promotes the Mayor's activities on the main social media channels ensuring best quality images and relevant tagging. This also allows post frequency to be increased. This also shows the human face of the Town Mayor and publicises all their activities.

The Town Council Help Point team also create a Tourism based blog monthly that is posted on our main website and then promoted at the beginning of the month on our social media channels. This highlights activities and tourism highlights in the immediate vicinity of Burgess Hill.

## Strategy Going forward

**Based on this information and analysis, this is the proposed Social Media Strategy for Burgess Hill Town Council for 2026:**

Our aims are:

- Keep Burgess Hill residents informed on local events and projects delivered by Town Council
- Provide updates, information and relevant news using the Town Council social media pages only eg Footpath and road closures;
- Share events and activities provided by other Burgess Hill groups which help promote a positive image of Burgess Hill and its Community;
- Recognise the role of sponsors. With increasing financial pressure to seek external funding and sponsorship due to budgetary restraints, it is appropriate to provide public recognition to businesses that contribute to council activities. This should not be viewed as a form of endorsement but a quid pro quo and a development of partnership working. We recognise the role of partners who are volunteers and or community organisations so a streamlined approach to recognise anyone that support council must be publicly recognised. Rules around separating advertising and sponsorship are clear and the CET aware how to thank without advertising.
- Sharing of good news stories provided by businesses. Our website enables community groups and businesses to share positive news stories, where possible we will always look to share stories that are linking businesses to community groups or are for direct benefit residents. Examples of publishable good news are:
  - Charity/community groups/groups of residents or an individual, sharing funds raised.
  - Businesses that have performed an act of kindness/raised funds for the benefit of a community group
  - Businesses that are offering free activities/providing treats for residents to receive – promoting their community engagement
  - Not acceptable would be a business advertising their products an example being a restaurant promoting activities that residents would have to pay for that would normally be promoted via paid for advertising.

Finally, the CET will consider submissions to the "Advise of an event" for social media and priority will be given to Burgess Hill focused activities in every instance. Events that are considered political or religious will not be published. The CET are officers of council and must remain neutral and therefore groups that could be deemed as presenting a specific ideology could leave Council open to criticism.

Facebook is the main platforms to inform residents, including information on Council meetings and operations. Instagram is not used as a point of information, instead it is used to share images and videos from events and projects, posters, and images of the town. Facebook is used more formally. Instagram should continue to be used as a positive space, and, in particular Instagram Stories, can be used to engage with residents in a less formal manner. Instagram is a growth point for us, and is a space that can continue to grow and be used to connect with residents. Currently there are no plans to consider implementation of Tik Tok due to additional time needed.

Resourcing should be taken into account to understand that sourcing and producing content takes officer time, and the amount of time available for this depends on workload. Facebook live streaming and Instagram stories should be used to provide live coverage and updates for Town Events. Post frequency for all platforms may increase when promoting events.

Content will be from a variety of sources, including in-house graphic design, photography and video content. Stock images are rarely used, as well as sharing content from other pages. Wherever possible and appropriate, images should be used, rather than plain text posts, as this is more engaging.

Content from other Town Council departments continues but could be increased, to show a wider range of the work we do, including before and after images of maintenance work completed.

Our social media platforms are also a contact point for residents. Messages to these platforms should be addressed promptly within working hours, and in a consistent manner to enquiries dealt with by the Help Point. An auto-response is in place advising of the hours the page is monitored, and alternative ways to contact the Council.

Comments that are direct questions should be responded to, either answering the question where appropriate, or directing the commenter to the correct contact route. Comments that breach our Acceptable Use Policy will be deleted, and users blocked if this is a persistent issue.

Adverts/boosted posts will be used as required, funded out of the relevant budget code.

We can measure the success of our platforms by the level of positive engagement received, including comments, shares, and reactions, however must be aware that not all content shared can be positive and open for engagement, as one of our main aims is to keep residents informed. Growth in following and levels of reach and engagement are recorded on a monthly basis.

A monthly social media report is provided to Management Team to highlight analytical data with comments on from the CET.

Policy produced and approved July 2022.

Reviewed in January 2026 by Head of Community Engagement.

To be reviewed in January 2029.