

WHPC 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024  
Agenda item 24/056  
WHPC + Social Media

**Purpose:** To consider WHPC's social media presence and determine whether the Council should maintain its Facebook page and/or X feed.

### **Background**

When the Parish Council was established in 2017, a page was set up on Facebook (@westhillcouncil) and an X (Twitter) feed (@WestHillPC) established for use by the Council. The purpose of these was to engage with the community by disseminating information about the Parish Council, such as meetings or events, and engaging with other similar organisations (County/District Councils, other non-profit or governmental organisations etc) by disseminating their posts (Facebook = "sharing"; X = "retweeting") or other items of interest to our residents.

WHPC currently has 152 followers on Facebook and 109 followers on X. It is important to note that many of these followers are other organisations – so the number of West Hill residents following WHPC on these platforms is really much lower.

Maintaining a social media presence can be very time-consuming if it is to be done properly. Over the last 6 years, the task has been done by various Councillors according to their available time and interest. No single Councillor has taken on the overall task of "social media" - but rather at various times one Councillor might post on Facebook and another on X. I have ensured that information about monthly/extraordinary meetings are tweeted regularly on X. However, it is fair to say that neither Facebook nor X are heavily used or particularly up to date (Facebook is less up to date than X). The Parish Council does not monitor the content. Instead, residents are encouraged to contact WHPC rather than posting about issues online. This enables WHPC to keep track of correspondence from residents and respond to their enquiries properly.

The other problem with social media is that it can encourage a cycle of negativity and it is too easy for disagreements between posters to escalate inside the echo chamber. We have all heard about "trolls" - keyboard warriors who delight in posting negative or aggressive comments online. WHPC has been made aware of negative posts in a closed (i.e. members only) Facebook group (What's On In West Hill). Whilst these posts are outside of WHPC's control, by referring to Council business the posts could appear to implicate WHPC and risk reputational damage.

Devon County Council and East Devon District Council maintain a presence on Facebook. However, Devon County Council is no longer active on X and have published "our account is no longer monitored. Our website is full of useful info <https://devon.gov.uk> or you can get in touch via <https://devon.cc/contactus>"

### **For consideration**

Councillors are asked to consider whether WHPC should retain its presence on Facebook and X.  
Are they helpful to our residents if they are not up to date?  
Should WHPC delete/keep one or both?

Cllr Alison Carr  
6<sup>th</sup> February 2023