

Briefing Note

Creating a Council Instagram account

3 min read

1.0 Background

1.1 The relationship between a Council and its residents relies on clarity, accessibility, and mutual respect. While our statutory communications meet our legal obligations (our website, and our own choice to set up a Facebook account), there is still a gap in how we engage with the daily lives of our residents. To bridge this divide, I propose the establishment of an official **Council Instagram account**. This platform is not just a digital trend; it is a vital tool for improving the quality of life for the people we serve.

2.0 What it will do

2.1 The primary benefit of an Instagram account is the publishing of actionable, real-time information. Traditional methods of communication, such as our quarterly Informer or the website, often reach residents too late. Through Instagram, we can provide:

- Immediate Service Alerts: Whether it is a diverted bus route, an emergency road repair, or a change to refuse collection during a bank holiday, residents receive updates instantly on their mobile devices.
- Simplified Civic Guidance: Many parish council processes can feel bureaucratic. We can use 'Highlights' and 'Reels' to create simple, step-by-step visual guides on how to comment on planning applications, report potholes or fly-tipping and reminders on voting or electoral registration.
- Public Health and Safety: In times of extreme weather or public health concerns, the ability to send out clear, visual advice can directly ensure the safety of our most vulnerable neighbours.

2.2 Instagram provides a unique shop window for our parish, allowing us to champion local organisations and promote events.

- Supporting local events: By featuring our volunteering and special interest groups, we encourage residents to engage together, going some way towards creating a cohesive and tolerant community.
- Access to Amenities: Many residents are unaware of what their parish council (and Cornwall Council) can do for them in practical terms or as a route to lobbying. We can showcase our village halls, playground and open spaces, as well as other facilities in neighbouring parishes (for example, the wider leisure facilities and events held in Liskeard).

3.0 Reducing the democratic deficit and promoting wider civic engagement

3.1 A visual-first platform breaks down barriers. For the younger residents who may feel disconnected from local politics, Instagram offers a more inclusive and approachable way to stay informed. It humanises the parish council, moving away from 'faceless' administration and towards a transparent, two-way conversation. By adopting this platform, we are not just posting pictures; we are building a more informed, resilient, and connected community.

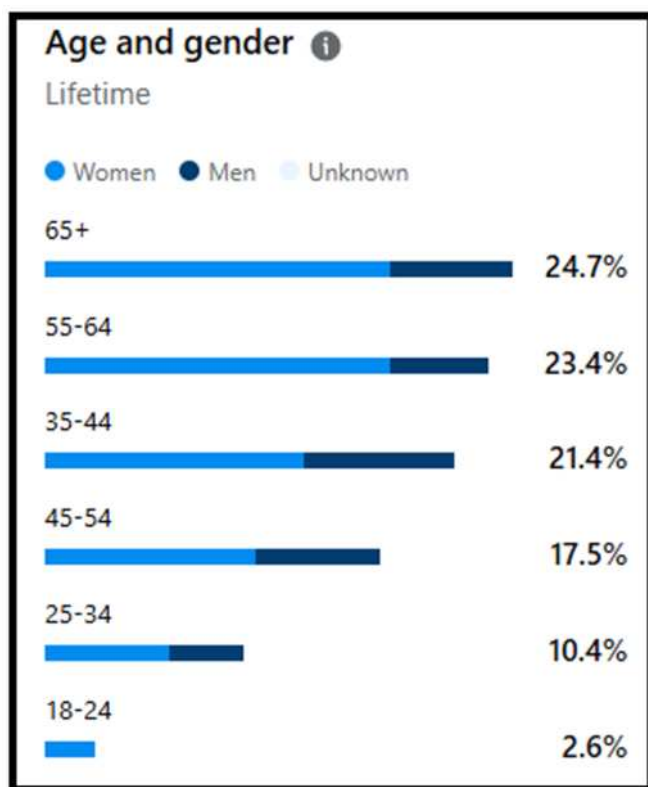
4.0 How safe is it?

4.1 To ensure this platform remains a constructive and positive environment, we will extend the Moderation and Engagement Strategy currently in place on our Facebook account. This includes:

- **Monitoring:** The account will be managed during office hours by the councillor currently responsible for the Facebook page, ensuring that residents' enquiries are acknowledged and forwarded onto the most appropriate team members, where appropriate.
- **Clear Community Guidelines:** We will publish a 'Code of Conduct' to discourage antisocial behaviour, ensuring the page remains a safe space for civilised exchanges and helpful feedback.
- **Signposting:** For complex personal casework, residents can be directed to the appropriate councillor (parish or Cornwall) ensuring Instagram remains a high-level information hub while maintaining data privacy.

5.0 Why Instagram?

5.1 Instagram attracts a younger demographic - typically, 70% of users are under 35. Compared to the council's own Facebook page, 70% of users are OVER the age of 35. Although relatively small in number (we have 166 registered users over 35), they represent the equivalent of 31% of our over-35 population. Facebook is an efficient way of reaching our residents. Instagram will help reach a younger audience.



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