

Questions raised on West Lothian Council's use of social media site X

Questions have been raised over whether West Lothian Council should continue to use the social media site X (formerly Twitter).

Concerns have been raised by Edinburgh councillors over their use of the platform, highlighting the actions of its owner Elon Musk and changes to its policies around fact-checking.

SNP group leader Janet Campbell asked senior managers whether their use of the platform should also be reviewed.

Councillors on the Corporate Policy and Resources PDSP heard that the Scottish Government relies on X to maximise its coverage in terms of spreading important information such as safety warnings during Storm Eowyn in January.

Social media channels are kept under constant monitoring Garry Heron, the Corporate Communications Manager, assured councillors.

Councillor Campbell asked: "Has any consideration been given to closing the West Lothian Council Twitter X account given that the City of Edinburgh has recently made this decision?"

Mr Heron told the meeting: "I'm aware that Edinburgh city council is considering their social media at the minute, and we're aware of some debate in other councils with what to do with various social media channels. Its something we review

continually.”

“Will this be constantly reviewed in light of the fact that it now appears the this [X] appears to be the source of much of the misinformation that we see in the whole of the media?” Councillor Campbell asked.

Musk has courted controversy since he took over Twitter and renamed it X. In recent months he has made personal posts to millions of followers criticising the Labour Government over its response to the Southport killings and also taking aim at groups he had previously voiced support for, including the Reform party and its leader Nigel Farage.

Graham Hope, the council’s Chief Executive, told the meeting that the Scottish Government and its agencies such as Transport Scotland used X as a principle platform to disseminate information.

Mr Hope said: “One of the practical points that Garry might wish to highlight is that national agencies in Scotland including Scotrail, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Government health department use Twitter; it’s much easier for use to convey information to the public through the same platform.

“In terms of crisis and emergency these agencies are using Twitter, and some of them are solely using Twitter, not Facebook. It’s easier for us to relay those messages through our social media directly rather than cutting and pasting. There can be a lot of messages during such events. “

Mr Heron said: “In Storm Eowyn a few weeks ago Transport Scotland used primarily X to share messages, and they were asking all councils to share messages via that channel so that’s a good example of the challenges [we’d face] if we were to remove particular channels.”

He added: “We do have a significant following on X , as we do

across our other social media channels, but it's something that is under consideration. I know other councils are considering their position, Edinburgh, as well as perhaps one other council. I'm aware that X is used by the Scottish Government, and UK government agencies rely upon X to get their message across to customers."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter