MSPs in attendance:

Willie Coffey MSP
Fiona MacLeod MSP
Liam McArthur MSP

WC welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes from the September meeting were approved.

1. **Key recommendations from SOCITM's Insight report 'Get into the Digital Vanguard' - Ian Watt (IW)**

IW explained the work of SOCITM, a members' organisation for ICT professionals, which is committed to professional development. SOCITM carries out Better Connected surveys – an annual peer review of 432 council websites and how well they are providing digital services.

IW summarised the SOCITM Digital Agenda briefing by Steve Halliday, which introduces the idea that we are in a new digital age, "characterised by simultaneous revolutions in communications and transactional technologies, linking business and personal computers and people."

Citizens expect us to provide open and easy access to organisations and having a website is no longer enough – organisations need to be on social media. Staff need to be able to access social media sites and also need to be given the skills to use social media to engage with the public.

There are lots of opportunities for organisations, e.g. open data. There are an enormous number of platforms; the challenge to organisations is to work out how they use them and where they focus their efforts.

IW explained that not providing access to the web for employees is a real barrier and that a major concern that needs to be challenged is the perception that colleagues will be timewasting. IW ran through some of the other challenges and concerns, including information security.

2. **Gordon Scobbie (GS)**

GS introduced himself as the former lead for ACPO UK's digital engagement.

GS said that in order to drive the digital agenda through the workplace, leadership is really important. Colleagues don't personally need to be on social media, but need to understand the strategic implications for their organisations of not being on social media.

GS asked what we know about social media users. They like to post content online, things can go viral – think what that means for your organisation. Content could be negative if you don't control the information flow. GS gave examples of viral content e.g. the video of the woman throwing the cat in the wheelie bin and people using the web to organise protests.

For policing and public order, you have to be in the digital space. Twitter has now become a credible news channel. We live in a connected world – platforms are not important, but the point to note is that the connectivity is there. He gave a positive example of Ed Harrison, a community policeman, who communicated with his community and used social media to have a two way conversation through Twitvid video surgeries. Engaging on the web extends your reach into the community.

As an organisation, you need to give support and guidance and have a strategy (leadership and a joined-up business).

During the London riots, most of the social media activity, such as the clean-ups, was positive. If you don't get information in a timely and accurate manner, someone will fill the void.

Engagement is a foundation which supports intelligence. So what do organisations need and what have we learned?

- Trust is necessary
- Access to software – workplaces couldn't get access to open source software during critical incidents
- We've moved away from desktops and laptops to the mobile, which is a game-changer

There has been some good work on digital engagement by Tayside Police, which hasn't been taken forward by Police Scotland.

GS said the question was prepared your organisation would be to communicate with the public in a critical and fast-moving situation.

3. **The application of social media to workplace learning – Ian Watson (IWa), Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS)**

IWa explained that the work of his team is to engage people with social services. The team's focus is on using the web for workplace learning.

People have to be able to use social media in the workplace. People who can seek information and share it with colleages can be an asset but a barrier tends to be that colleagues can't access it.

A recent report from the Royal Society of Edinburgh says that organisations need to provide online access, alongside workplace and IT policies that enhance familiarity with digital technology. A Carnegie Trust report in 2009 made the point that social media is influential. IWa said these reports need to be taken seriously.

IRISS helps organisations use new tools to make themselves productive. If customers use it, you need to use it otherwise you are pushing costs onto the customer.

IWa cited an IRISS database called MindReel which contains short-films on mental health for a film festival. Local authorities couldn't access these because video-streaming was not

allowed even though the site was an educational resource. Organisations need to trust employees.

Q&A

Charlotte Christison from Ofcom asked what steps IRISS and SOCITM were taking to train employers. IWa said that IRISS have produced a portal encouraging people to speak to their IT depts and enact change. IW felt that changes need to be bottom-up. GS said that the business case needed to be made for organisations and that the London riots had helped engage the police.

In response to a question on whether security was a barrier, GS said that it is about balancing security with the need to engage.

Mairi Mcleod asked about low levels of digital literacy and how this could be improved. Engaging with employers can be hard – it is difficult to take on your boss.

IW said that it is about trying to build up dialogue and the more you can demonstrate why you need to access a particular tool. Digital skills won't develop unless you use digital services – development is experiential.

GS said that the biggest threat to the Government's digital agenda is a lack of digital skills and a lack of leadership at a strategic level in organisations. This is a fairly seismic change need in the public sector, not just a nudge.

IW said that it is incumbent on any organisation to understand what skills organisations need, including digital.

WC asked for further information on why he felt Police Scotland hadn't embraced digital skills. GS said that Police Scotland had embraced social media but that it mostly been a one-way transition rather than a two-way dialogue. He said that visibility is not just about cops in yellow jackets but also about the digital footprint. He gave the example of Tayside developing an app that can track if a police officer is monitoring traffic which gives confidence to communities.

John Crawford said that the issue is about content as well as communication, assessing the quality of information needs attention.

GS said that the acid test is if people come back, you grow your audience. If you trust them to engage externally, why not trust them on social media.

4. **Doreen Kelly – Chief Executive, Partners for Inclusion (PfI)**

DK opened with a quote from Chris Yiu about the benefits of digital participation. For the people PfI support, when everyone matters, everyone benefits. If you can include the people PfI support, some of whom have significant learning disabilities, you can include anyone digitally.

DK gave a history of PfI, an organisation which supports ordinary lives. Giving people the power to lead ordinary lives in the community as a citizen, it provides a bespoke service, based on what's right for the individual.

DK spoke about some of the challenges:
- Intellectual disabilities – some people don't use words to communicate
- Past institutionalisation can result in challenging behaviours

People still want an ordinary life but just need extra support – what people might use the internet for is the same as other people will use it for. We need to be focussing on individuals and what their needs are – often they have no voice e.g. voting – and to go out and make sure they are included in society.

Digital inclusion should be made a human rights and citizen matter – those who are marginalised need to be the main focus for a digital champion.

5. AGM Business

The Group agreed for Willie Coffey MSP to continue as Convenor, and for Liam McArthur MSP to continue as Deputy Convenor. The Group agreed for Charlotte Christison/Claire Mack from Ofcom to act as Secretary and for Vicki Nash to act as Treasurer.

6. Members' points

Adrienne Chalmers presented to the Group on a current issue in the US relating to the accessibility of e-Readers. Amazon and Sony have made representations to the FCC to seek an exemption for their eReaders because their devices are made accessible on Apple products which have a screen reader. AC asked for the support of the Group to support a proposition to act on this issue.

Action: WC will seek guidance from the Parliamentary Standards Committee on whether we can write to the FCC as a Group.

Mairi Mcleod asked which organisations could support AC.

Action: CC to circulate AC's e-mail address

Fiona MacLeod MSP asked whether the CPG for Visual Impairment could get involved or put down a motion.

Action: AC to send a briefing note to CC who will circulate

The Group agreed that, if Standards permitted, we can go ahead and take action by writing to the FCC to express concerns.

Sally Dyson from SCVO introduced herself and highlighted a new programme of work on digital participation at SCVO led by Chris Yiu. The aim of the programme is to reduce the

number of people not accessing the internet through work with third sector organisations.