SM So the first questions are introductory. What is your role within [Council 2]?

IR6 Okay, well I’m a digital marketing officer and I’m responsible for leading on the council’s campaigns through advertising on certain digital channels, including websites, social media and sort of digital partners like MEN and nationals, other regional newspapers and things like that. So I’m mainly responsible for the advertising side and a bit of the social media side as well.

SM Okay and how did you come to be involved in this line of work?

IR6 I actually studied marketing at university and then I went off at a different tangent and did events management, where I did a bit of marketing there. That didn’t work out so I took a job at the council originally in regeneration and then I found my way back into marketing which is what I wanted to do.

SM Okay and are social media and such tools used at the [Council 2]?

IR6 Yes, yeah, we do use a few tools.

SM Okay, could you tell me which tools are those?

IR6 We use Google analytics a lot. We also use a system called Meltwater and that has a few different functions. It helps to sort of schedule because we send out quite a lot of different social media messages and we have a number of different accounts, in fact we have over fifty different social media accounts. So it helps us to schedule our messages in for different accounts at different times, but it also provides analytics and monitoring and that sort of thing as well. It also provides sort of engagement as well which helps with like engaging with sort of residents and things like that through social media.

SM I know there’s the Meltwater package which is for press and then there’s Meltwater Buzz which is more their analytic ((01:44?)) so you use both of them?

IR6 We use Meltwater Buzz rather than the press.

SM Okay so you largely contract the insights from Meltwater Buzz or you…

IR6 No we use the system to create the insights ourselves.

SM Okay. With the help of their technicians to set up queries and that sort of thing I imagine?

IR6 No, we set up our own queries. They offer support in using the system but it’s mainly done in-house.

SM Okay, okay. And could you talk us through the process that you currently use. You spoke about a combination of Google Analytics and Meltwater Buzz, so I…

IR6 There’s two different sides to it really. There’s monitoring what is happening through social media channels, so these would be sort of the number of followers and likes and how often they are going up. How often people are engaging with the accounts sort of re-Tweeting our accounts, how often we re-Tweet other people. So there’s those sort of analytics that we use on the social side. Then, there’s the paid advertising, the sort of the digital advertising side of it as well and that’s where we use Google Analytics a lot more. So we use it that to sort of analyse the amount-, we will sort of paid advertising through Facebook and sometimes Twitter, so we use Analytics to sort of analyse the amount of people that click through to the website from those advertising campaigns. So there’s two very distinct types of monitoring that we use the two different systems for.

SM And before settling for the Meltwater Buzz, did you trial other tools or?

IR6 I believe so. That was before I joined the team so I’m not sure what other tools were researched. I can find that information out and get back to you on that.

SM Okay, that would be useful actually. And Meltwater Buzz how many years has it now been in use in [Council 2]?

IR6 That again, I’m not sure of so I’d need to get back to you because again I wasn’t part of the original procurement. I think it’s probably been about three years off the top of my head.

SM Okay and so are the social media analytics then from Meltwater Buzz done within your department, I think it’s the Communications and Press department right? Or do other departments do also?

IR6 No, I do all the analytics for the social media.

SM Okay, which is then cascaded depending on relevance to other services and so on.

IR6 Yes.

SM Okay and who is then-, your department is the one that’s responsible for the management of that side of…

IR6 Yes it would be my department but also, we have a Planning and Insight team so they collect statistics off all our marketing channels online and offline and social media. I provide reports to them, they collate it and then provide a sort of overview of how we’re performing as a whole team, a whole communications team.

SM Okay. Right that sets the introduction very well. Now I have a series of questions about the insights themselves. Why did [Council 2] decide to use social media insights?

IR6 Again, that’s something I probably need to double check with our Insight’s team. I would imagine it’s because we want to monitor how well we’re engaging with residents. You know we need to sort of add value for money really and gain value for money and we’ve stopped a lot of our offline newsletters and things that we used to post through people’s doors. We use social media a lot more instead of those medias and I guess it was a way of monitoring how well people are resonating and engaging with that and how well received our communications were on those medias.

SM Okay, so the aims were apart from the listening and Buzz side of it, to engagement?

IR6 Yeah, engagement is a big part of it as well. It’s something that we’re going to continue to work on in the future.

SM What other aims can you think of that social media insights contributes to?

IR6 It helps us to sort of inform. So there’s three different sides to it I think. There’s informing residents of services and news. There’s engaging with residents to see how they feel about our services and keep them informed and then there’s the advertising side of it as I said. And also to keep tabs on value for money and those sorts of things to do with digital advertising through social media.

SM Okay, and may I ask what kind of insights exactly you are undertaking?

IR6 Yeah, so we measure the amount of people who follow our accounts. How often they engage with each one of our posts. How often we engage with other people’s posts. We measure general sentiment, how happy people are, how positive the comments are, and the amount of clicks we get through to the council’s website. The amount of impressions, so the amount of people generally that our messages are exposed to from re-Tweets and from our own accounts. What else do we monitor? Oh we also monitor our rich media so that includes sort of Vimeo, Flicker and YouTube as well. We monitor how often our videos are played, and loaded and how long people spend watching those as well.

SM Okay, so it’s not up-, of course Facebook and Twitter I guess are prominent candidates in the insights you undertake but involves also others?

IR6 Yes, so it involves Flicker, YouTube and Vimeo and also LinkedIn, we also use LinkedIn quite often as well.

SM Okay and for how long is our-, things that you monitor followed? It depends on the issue you are looking at or?

IR6 We monitor them on a month by month basis. I provide a monthly report to the Insights team and also they are monitored on a campaign basis so whenever we’ve spent some money on advertising through social media I’ll provide a report following that campaign.

SM I would be really keen to have some examples of concrete findings or social media insights, possibly in the form of documentation so things that you have found particularly useful or and so on.

IR6 That would probably be something that would come from our Insights team, because what I do is I pass the information to them and then they present it within the wider context. So if you could let me know which questions you want me to ask them and I will get you that information.

SM Okay. Yeah because in the interviews we’ve done so far, we’ve typically asked our respondents in our particular organisations to give a concrete example of an insight that has been-, that has then been used in some specific way.

IR6 Ah right, yeah, yeah.

SM So I can email you about that.

IR6 Yeah, please.

SM I think if possible we could have like maybe part of a website, a link or a report or anything so we can see what’s happening to the insight in practice that would be great.

IR6 Okay, yeah, yeah, that would definitely be our Insights team because that-, I’ve had the information sent to me use that for their strategic planning purposes, so they should be able to get you that information.

SM Okay and when you commission or undertake insights what do you think you will use them for or do with them?

IR6 Do you mean by commission by just sort of undertaking them in general?

SM Yeah, undertaking given that you do them in house.

IR6 Yeah I mean on the advertising side it’s to evaluate how well performed, how well that channel’s performed so if we advertise through Facebook and Twitter has it been value for money? Have people responded? Is it worth pursuing that again for other similar campaigns? Through the sort of monitoring and engagement side of the social media accounts it’s more to assess our messages. You know are people responding to our messages in the way that they should? Are people finding the content interesting? Are we engaging with people as well as we should? It’s just generally monitoring how well people are responding to our account.

SM Okay, is it used-, are insights used all over customer relations?

IR6 No, but I suspect they will be in the future, yeah.

SM Okay now I have a series of questions about the actual users of insight. So what have been the insights used for?

IR6 So they’re mainly used for planning of different campaigns in the future and also are used for strategic reporting and that’s the side that I don’t have any control over, yeah, I don’t have a strategic overview of how that information’s used. So again, that’s something the Planning and Insights team will need to get back to you on.

SM And so if I understand correctly once you have produced an insights report on a monthly basis going to the Insights team also you send it more broadly or is that the task the Insights team do?

IR6 Yeah, it’s the task of the Insights team, to cascade it up to strategic managers and I guess that’s shared with some councillors even and different services at a more strategic level.

SM Okay and so the analysis is done by the Insights team then or partly by you partly by them?

IR6 The analysis is done by me so I collect the raw data and then I forward that into the Insights team and they collate it and present it as a whole overall team.

SM So because I imagine presenting social media data or insights from social media data is kind of a very delicate task to make understandable and digestible by others. So this is something that you do before…

IR6 Yes, that’s right. Because obviously they’re familiar with it now because we’ve been doing it a number of years but it is a task to make them familiar with the different metrics and it’s still a task of mine to do that.

SM So the question I had now was whether you know if any decisions are made on the basis of Insights? Or that’s again something you should-, I should probably ask for you to…

IR6 Yeah, anything that’s more strategic and wider objectives and that sort of thing probably would come from the Insights team, I wouldn’t know.

SM Okay. Again whether any actions have been taken on the basis of insights, your knowledge?

IR6 Actions? Trying to think. The only thing I can say I can think of is more the advertising where we’ve looked at how people have responded to a Facebook advert that we’ve put through, if people haven’t responded that well or to a particular advert if people haven’t responded to it and we’ve then decided not to use that particular channel again. Or to invest less in that channel if we’re going to test if for different campaigns. So it’s more informing the advertising side of it. That’s decisions I would make.

SM So I imagine results of actions are tracked to see whether…

IR6 Yeah. So we track sort of how people interact and whether people click for that advert through Analytics and through Facebook and Twitter themselves to evaluate how well that particular sort of Facebook channel or social media channel is performing.

SM Okay and broadly speaking the results of the actions tracked would you be able to comment on them whether you think-, and what kind of things have been informed you about it?

IR6 Well looking from previous campaigns we know that Facebook works extremely well with people in [City 2], [City 2] residents seem to respond really well with them. They tend to share a lot of contact, they don’t only click through to the website, but they share, they comment, so they interact quite well. They re-Tweet a lot of our content, so they respond quite well and they engage with it quite well. So that’s something I found quite surprising actually, but pleasantly surprised, yeah.

SM And how useful would you say the insights have been then?

IR6 I think they’ve been invaluable you know. I think they’re very, very, useful to a) assess whether you’re going along the right track really, people are responding more to sort of offline, if it’s worth putting more money towards more posters and that sort of thing or, whether it’s worth sticking with social media channels. And we found that overwhelmingly over the past few sort of campaigns and the reports that I’ve done, that people responded well to social media so we’ve continued to invest in those sort of ways of communicating with people. And without the insights and analytics and the data behind that we couldn’t have made those decisions with any sort of weight behind them, without any intelligence behind them.

SM Yeah. I want to come back to the insights and could you talk me a bit about what their precise role is within the [Council 2]?

IR6 Well they have two-, it’s a Planning and Insights team so they have two different functions. They plan overall campaigns for the council that ((14:58?)) whether we do radio advertising or whether we do posters for a given campaign. But they also collect metrics so all those different advertising channels including digital channels as well, to evaluate how well we’re doing as a whole. I only deal with sort of the digital side of it, so I don’t really see sight of what’s happening with the offline channels. But they have an overview of it all and they collect information from all the different advertisement and engagement channels that use and then present that whether we’re producing value for money or whether our approach is working.

SM Okay, okay and they are within the communications…

IR6 They sit within the communications team, so we all sit within the wider sort of communications team.

SM Okay, okay. Then I have a question about whether you think social media insights are beneficial and if so to whom; for [Council 2], for the public and citizens or others?

IR6 I think that they’re beneficial potentially to everyone it depends on what sort of metric you are providing them to you really. I mean for ordinary residents who might not have sort of an indepth knowledge of social media maybe just simple metrics for those people to let them know that we’re embracing sort of new ways of communicating and that it is value for money. It is cheaper than running maybe 100,000 leaflets to send some messages through Facebook to reach people. So it will let residents know that you know we’re providing value for money and we are communicating through the methods they want us to communicate with. Internally for different services and for internal teams we might have some more involved metrics in reporting where you can drill down into detail about how specific different channels have performed. And the cost and the internal investment and those kind of hard metrics. So yeah, I think they’re useful to everyone, different metrics will be useful to different people.

SM Okay and when you say metrics I guess that’s when you speak about value for money it’s very obvious that social media does save a lot compared to printing leaflets and so on.

IR6 Depending on the campaign, one thing that is useful about digital advertising and digital metrics in general is that you can say you’ve put £100 into this and this is what will come out of it and it’s very easily tracked. So from that perspective it is a good way ((17:23?)).

SM Okay and what I’m wondering in terms of metrics how what do you have in mind when you’re evaluating for example the success of a campaign that’s partly on Facebook? How do you measure success? What is the yardstick there?

IR6 Yeah, so we use sort of general sort of digital marketing benchmarks really. Click through rates, impressions, we use conversion rates as well if we’re asking people to sign up for stuff for example and increasingly so and how we’re looking at advocacy. So how people sort of share our campaigns and comment because when they share, I think there’s quite, I think it’s quite important out there to actually share in a concept, because they’ve actually stamped their own approval to share that with their own followers. So we look at engagement as well as just the standard click freeze and impressions and that as well.

SM And again, this is a question that you might feel that the Insights team might be better able to answer but what other mechanisms of gaining public feedback does [Council 2] use?

IR6 We have web forms that people can provide online feedback and we have that on every single web page on the website. I can only speak digitally so it’s mainly website and also comments on our Facebook posts as well is quite good to get an indicator of how people are responding and Tweets that come in to our in-box. Offline methods I’m not so sure, and that’s where Insights team maybe should be able to help you.

SM Yeah, because here we have a series of questions and we typically ask the people we interview and with City Council I imagine its things like consultations.

IR6 Consultations yeah.

SM Citizen’s panels, that sort of thing, surveys.

IR6 Yeah, that’s right.

SM And then we try to see how social media insights compare to these other ways of gaining feedback.

IR6 Ah, right, yeah. That is probably something that they would need to provide you with because I only see one half of it you see. They would have more of an overview.

SM Then we ask whether they think social media insights are better, superior or inferior in some respects and in others are okay?

IR6 Okay. Yeah, yeah.

SM And then the other series of questions we have is about possible barriers to using social media insights. So the first question is there anything that you hope to do with insights that you weren’t able to or didn’t for a variety of reasons?

IR6 I think it’s difficult to get non-digital people to understand the value of particular metrics. I think people are focussed on sort of number of followers and number of people that like your accounts. Which I can see the value in that as well, but it’s difficult to get people to recognise the value of someone re-Tweeting a message, or sharing a message. I think people do understand but I don’t think they fully understand how important that is. So what we try to work on as well is trying to get away from the sort of ‘obvious’ metrics sort of like we‘ve got 15,000 or 20,000 followers. And get people to understand that only 100 fully engaged followers that really share or are passionate about what they do is far more valuable than 100,000 people that are passive. So I think that’s the main thing.

SM So I guess it’s a talent that parking boats going a little bit faster the blunt quantity of…

IR6 Figures, yeah it’s really taking it a stage further and analysing what those figures actually mean and are they actually valuable in isolation by themselves or do we need to kind of compare those figures?

SM What sort of ways have you kind of employed or thought about to move in that direction would you say?

IR6 It’s just a case of really education. So it’s explaining to people saying that’s fine we’ll give you these figures but we also feel that these other figures are valuable. Just explaining and giving a bit of a qualitative explanation behind each of the metrics as well and not just giving them-, blinding them with stats or graphs.

SM So it involves a glossary of terms all that sort of thing?

IR6 Yeah, not just a glossary of terms though, a bit more explanation of how these figures are useful and why you’ve decided to provide those figures.

SM Okay, have you encountered any difficulties using the insights?

IR6 Not really, no. I mean I think the systems that we use provides the information that we need. And that’s it really, the main struggle is just getting people to recognise additional metrics.

SM So one difficulty then is obviously colleagues attitudes towards social media insights which because of reasons tied to appreciation of what social media can do or?

IR6 Yeah, it’s just getting people to kind of-, it’s an education process isn’t it? It’s not an attitude, not an incorrect attitude I wouldn’t say that it was that, I would just say that’s not their day to day jobs so they didn’t fully appreciate or maybe they might overlook certain metrics that we would appreciate within the digital team. So it’s just highlighting that and getting people to sort of have a look at those other metrics as well really.

SM Do you think organisational structures also play a role in people’s ideas about analytics and insights?

IR6 Possibly, because we do have a central team and then we have other services. We act as an agency really and those other services sort of buy our services. So because they haven’t got their own social media person, they don’t tend to have much interaction because we do it all on their behalf, maybe there isn’t as much understanding there as could be, but I don’t think it poses too much of a problem, but it might have played a role.

SM Is it the case that sometimes it may be difficult to make sense of the insights themselves? Even for the people doing the analysis, like yourself or the one’s disseminating it like the Insights team? Something here like a particular insight that perhaps can be interpreted in different ways or does that sometimes come up or?

IR6 No, that hasn’t come up actually. Because I think the metrics that we tend to provide because we provide it with an explanation and it isn’t just a graph, I think it’s pretty self-explanatory really. I don’t think there’s much confusion to be honest with you. I think that’s kind of testament to the communications team. Our relationship with the services and the services relationship to us, we’re quite good at communicating and everyone seems to understand what everyone else’s talking about, so, no we don’t really tend to encounter that problem.

SM Is it the case that sometimes the insights might be not actionable? So, a particular, very interesting piece of information, very hard to put it into arguments into some kind of action, so the question about the visibility of particular insights.

IR6 What do you mean by action?

SM So a particular piece of information I don’t know about something relating to one of your campaigns on Facebook but that is hard to not to make sense of, but to turn something out of let’s say.

IR6 How to explain or how to utilise that information?

SM Utilise it, yeah.

IR6 I think, well actually one of the main things is sentiment because we use a system and the system is a system and it doesn’t take context into account. So, if someone’s being positive slightly sarcastic it will see that as a negative. So when we do look at a sentiment we’re very careful and we’re very careful to mention it to the other people we share the information with to sort of say that it gives you just an idea of how people are feeling about council’s posts on social media. Because like you say it doesn’t take that context into account, it’s quite limited. So I think with using the system it is different from an actual person going through and looking through the posts and coming up with their interpretation. So I think that would be the main barrier.

SM Okay. How do other people in the council feel about the usefulness and possibility of social media?

IR6 I think the council’s really embraced social media, right the way to the top really. I think there’s been quite a digital push. I think they recognise that it can provide great value for money. It’s a good way of communicating with people and also it’s a medium that people use. So I think that’s been quite widely recognised throughout all sort of services and increasingly we’re getting a lot more requests for social media. I’ve only been part of this team for eighteen months but I’ve seen sort of like an uplift in the amount of services that have requested social media, so it is being recognised as a good way of communicating with people.

SM Okay. Does a role or branch or service or department or other people in [Council 2] bear on their attitudes to insights?

IR6 So based on those insights do their attitudes change? Is that what you mean or?

SM That as well, but for example, I don’t know somebody in Customer Services will his opinion about insights, social media insights will be influenced by the fact that he’s in customer services as opposed to another team or as opposed to…?

IR6 Oh I see what you mean.

SM Basically it’s whether organisational kind of rootedness influences one’s views on?

IR6 Yeah, I know what you mean like different teams would view those insights differently?

SM Yeah.

IR6 I haven’t encountered that to be perfectly honest. I think there’s probably services that think that social media is more applicable to them than others, which is correct. I don’t think you can use social media for everything but that’s been minimal to be honest. I think people have been mainly positive and embraced it and that’s been the overwhelming sort of feeling I’ve got from the different services we use really.

SM Okay, so what do you think leads people to have positive attitudes then towards embracing social…?

IR6 I think a lot of it is the analytics and the metrics. I think they can easily see like I used of say spending £100 on Facebook and they can see what they get out of it. I think that’s a lot of it. They recognise that it’s easily track-able, it can easily measure return investment and they do recognise are using the medium as well. So I think a combination of those few factors means that people have viewed it quite positively. One thing I haven’t mentioned actually is we have a number of sort of place based ward accounts that represent each of the different areas within [City 2]. So we have an overall pocket account but we also have different sort of local level accounts as well. A lot of them the external teams that are external to comms have actually been trained in delivering Twitter and they run their own sort of Twitter account as well. So it is, it’s been great it’s been embraced to quite a high level actually.

SM Through a social media usage policy for [Council 2] or that sort of thing?

IR6 Yeah.

SM So would you say that to a large extent the social media have demonstrated their value added for [Council 2]?

IR6 Yes, yeah, definitely so.

SM Okay. Then the last set of questions is about potential issues in the usage of insights. The first are again quite broad but what do you think are the strengths and possibilities opened up by social media insights and data mining?

IR6 Well like I say, it’s easily traceable you can easily analyse how well your message has been received. Or whether you can get a return on your investment through use of that channel and I think that’s the strength of it really, you can easily ascertain what’s working and what isn’t working and quickly remedy that situation. So it isn’t like it’s a static sort of offline channel or magazine for example where that once it’s printed its printed. With social media you can monitor it on a daily or hourly basis if you want and if those messages aren’t working in the way that you want them to work, you can adapt the strategies so there’s an element of flexibility there as well.

SM Okay. Conversely what do you think are some of the weaknesses or problems associated with social media, data mining and insights?

IR6 I think it’s, there are very few negatives but one of the biggest negatives is that it’s very time consuming to collect meaningful data and it’s just you need to have the right skills and expertise to do it. So that can potentially be a barrier and if you haven’t got the right time or the expertise you can get incorrect data or misleading data. So you need to make sure that the right staff have the right resource to be able to provide the information.

SM Has that been a challenge with [Council 2]?

IR6 We’ve been quite lucky in that we’ve been always had people that have kind of understood sort of insights and data and I’ve had people that I’ve-, my predecessors that trained me and we were quite good at sharing knowledge in that sense but there’s always a danger there that might not carry on in the future so.

SM Okay, now I’m going to mention some of the issues that people raised in relation to social media, insights and monitoring and invite you to share your views on the issues if you have any. The first one is about representativeness. Some people say that what you find out through social media insights is not representative of the broad range of people’s views. What are your views on this?

IR6 I think if you take them in isolation then they could be, but I think if you use social media alongside other bits of communication like you were saying about the surveys and the consultations then I think it can be quite useful to give you an overview of people’s attitudes and values because you know you might only see one side of things. For example people might not respond if they’re happy about something but then they complain they’re maybe more likely to do that on Twitter for example. So you are only seeing one side, a skewed side of it. So it’s important not to take it in isolation really but use it with other sort of methods of evaluation.

SM So to be largely a complement to other methods of evaluation and probing about the public’s-, okay. Then the second one is about privacy. Some people have expressed concern about mining social media for data because social media users consider some online space is private even if they’re definitely public.

IR6 Hmn, yeah, it’s interesting that one because we never, ever sort of collate information that hasn’t already been shared. So if someone’s commented in a Facebook profile for example they decided to share that message with us. So we never really go into people’s profiles and have a look at their own profiles and take information that way. We only ever monitor the interaction on our own sort of social media so it’s information that people have decided to share with us.

SM You don’t do any kind of monitoring in the sense of let’s see what people are saying about [Council 2] on one of our accounts that’s not on our Facebook page or forums? I’m just wondering.

IR6 We have done but it’s not something we do very regularly, to be honest.

SM It’s more for in campaigns and stuff that?

IR6 We more use it for campaigns and that’s what I think I’m just generally how our accounts-, how people seem to be responding to this type of communication that we’re sending out. We don’t really tend to drill into that amount of detail. If there’s something that has maybe there’s a media story that’s affected the area, affected the council that might be an occasion where we might monitor things a little bit closely to see what people are saying. But we don’t tend to do that on a day-to-day general basis.

SM Okay. Why is that-, what are the reasons behind that monitoring of only your own Facebook pages or kind of?

IR6 I think maybe it’s just usefulness of data. We only monitor sort of what we use basically. The information that people need us to report on, so like this moment in time we only really see the need to sort of drill down in that detail even though we can. It’s not been requested of us, so for us it’s more about value for money and creating sort of value for money for residents and also communicating with residents in the way that they want us to. That’s our priority I think.

SM And I guess there’s also implications in terms of time and resources that have to go into that.

IR6 Yes, there’s that as well.

SM A third one is about security. Some people expressed concern that even though data may be gathered in some insecure ways someone else might get hold of it because you can’t always control where data goes. Any views on this?

IR6 We don’t share data that we collect. That is all internal and it’s always sent through internal emails, to internal teams and even when we report to sort of external departments, there’s nothing on a personal level, it’s always an overview for example, we’ve gained 5,000 new Twitter followers. There’s nothing, no real personal information there that’s being shared. So no, there’s not really anything that is in danger of being leaked really or anything like that.

SM Okay another one is about transparency. Some people say that social media data mining should be more visible, that users should be made more aware of it for example through clear and explicit statements and platforms.

IR6 Yeah, I mean I can understand why people would want that. I personally don’t see any objections with it but I don’t work in isolation so…

SM Hmm yeah, so you think users should have the opportunity to consent to data mining?

IR6 I don’t think it’s a case of opting in and opting out. It maybe something to inform people that we monitor our pages and we’re using insights to inform our campaigns etc. Because we don’t tend to go into that much detail, like we don’t sort of drill into people’s personal accounts really, that’s probably why it hasn’t come up. I know other organisations do and they sort of monitor individuals who sort of follow their accounts where we usually provide an overview. So it’s not as much of an issue for our team, but if we do decide to sort of start drilling in that detail, that often, then maybe that’s something that we’d look into putting a statement on. But as it stands there’s nothing really that personal that we share between our teams.

SM Okay another one is the field of ethics. Do you think social media data mining is an ethical practice and does it raise any ethical concerns for [Council 2]?

IR6 Well like I said the way that we look at data, because it is very broad and not very in-depth, I don’t think there is any ethical considerations there. Because we don’t really look into each individual user, but if we were to do that, then on occasions we were able to do that then maybe there would be. I mean I don’t know it’s part of a wider debate really and I can see both sides. I can see that information is public and I can see that argument but I can also see that from the users’ perspective as well as a user of social media. So it’s not really anything for the council to consider because of the way we use our data, but for other organisations I can understand why there would be ethical implications there.

SM Are any social media data mining practices that [Council 2] consider off-limits? So you probably said because you don’t drill down to an individual level unless the market basis you’re not that concerned by this kind of thing. But are there any other practices on terms of social media insights that are off limits?

IR6 Not that I can think of. The only thing I can think of is if we did start drilling down in detail then maybe we should come up with a policy or something that would take people’s concerns into account. But from-, I can only speak from the way that we use the data and I don’t have a huge fantastic knowledge of all the different data mining techniques that can be used so as far as I’m aware we’ve not encountered anything that could be unethical. But there may be some analytical data mining techniques out there that I’m not aware of those.

SM And finally, are there any regulations or guidelines that [Council 2] follows that relate to social media insights and data mining?

IR6 No, there’s not really any sort of guidelines really. We do have a social media policy that’s been developed but that’s-, that doesn’t really cover this sort of the insights, data monitoring sort of thing really. We sort of monitor our social media accounts, like we’d monitor anything else, like we monitor a consultation or like we’d monitor a qualitative survey in the street. We’d do it in that sort of way really, so we haven’t really seen the need for any sort of guidelines really. But that’s something that maybe I’ll take back to my manager and ask whether we do need that?

SM Okay. I’ve covered all the questions is there anything else you would like to add or comment upon or maybe you have any questions about the project or?

IR6 I’d just like to know a bit more about the book and what it would cover? I know it covers data mining, but sort of have you interviewed different-, how many different organisations have you interviewed?

SM I can tell you a little bit about that. So Helen Kennedy has been working on social media data mining for quite a while. So initially she looked at insight companies like Meltwater Buzz, BrandWatch and others in the UK and elsewhere, so she has done quite a few interviews with the insight companies themselves. Then as part of this project I did interviews with clients of social media insights companies, so to see what happens to the data. I kind of asked these sorts of questions to see that-, to basically explore whether it is used or not used, what kind of issues it presents on a very practical organisational ground. We’ve also broadened that to organisations that do data mining but in-house, so who do not use insight companies or not exclusively do it through insight companies. We talked to both private companies, public sector companies, third sector companies and so on; so to have a broader picture. We’re also doing a bit of research on activist users of data mining.

IR6 Right.

SM So the book will cover a broad range of themes around it. We’ll also look at academic data mining. Many of-, well some of the tools are built by academics for academic research and so yeah that’s the general idea.

IR6 Okay and have there been any general themes that have come out because you’ve asked the same set of questions presumably a few times now? Has anything?

SM Yeah plenty of themes. I wouldn’t know where to start, we haven’t properly analysed all the material we’ve gathered so far, that’s a target we’re starting in the next month or so.

IR6 Are people generally sort of concerned about the ethical side of it? Just for their own personal?

SM No not that much actually. Not that much. Because there’s no kind of clear guidance or regulations that any company follows because the typical thing that is said is that while it should be the responsibility of the platforms, it’s there, it’s public, it’s for the taking basically.

IR6 Right, right.

SM But we’re very interested to talk to [Council 2] because from what we had heard it’s quite advanced in the way it uses social media and social media insights as well. That’s what we heard from many people…

IR6 Oh that’s good.

SM … so that’s why we got in touch.

IR6 Okay, okay, that’s useful. Do you sort of know who’s recommended us, so I can sort of take that away?

SM It came from several sources and I wouldn’t be able to remember now. I know that other city councils are not as advanced as [Council 2] have done the transition to the social media side things more recently.

IR6 Ah okay, that’s useful feedback for us to know.

SM Okay. I’m glad. I’ll stop here. Thanks.