

# @Parliament: the failure of MPs to connect on Twitter

by

Parliament Street Research Team

and

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A Parliament **Street** paper

## Introduction

This is the first piece of original research commissioned by Parliament Street. As a group dedicated to breaking down the barriers between Parliament and the electorate, it is fitting that our first study looks into how we can encourage MPs to engage with their voters more effectively.

Our investigation seeks to uncover new ways of allowing backbench MPs to constructively engage with their constituents via the most dynamic of all social media sites: Twitter. This report offers a brief investigation of some techniques that backbench MPs who have distinguished themselves on the social media site use to amass thousands of followers. It is our hope that, by finding general patterns of behaviour that result in more 'followers' and encouraging more MPs to emulate this we can encourage a spread of good practice which would go a long way towards helping MPs connect with their constituents.

Apathy is at an all-time high, there can be no doubt about that. This report will argue that the troubling prevalence of political disinterest among the general public demands that MPs start reconsidering how they communicate with the electorate. Apathy isn't solved by forcing people to vote as this simply addresses the symptom and not the problem. What we need is for politicians to start addressing the concerns of their constituents and to start engaging with them much more frequently and much more prominently. The best way to do this is by actually communicating with them via a medium that will reach a large audience, i.e. social media.

Social media has become a ubiquitous feature of our modern society. Facebook and Twitter are the defining products of our age, tools that have changed the way we interact, communicate and live. They have become tools for revolution and for mass empowerment as well as commercial research and advertising. It is obvious that they offer MPs a unique opportunity to engage with the electorate effectively.

This paper will show that the most successful MPs can get many thousands of people following their every online word, and that this in turn can break down the misconceptions about politicians that seem to inform apathy. While a lot of research has been done on how many MPs use social media, we wanted to focus on how *successfully* they used it. We want to make sure that MPs are using social media in a way that allows them to connect to the public in new and effective ways. It's not enough to have every MP on Twitter, we want every MP to be engaging with ever-increasing numbers of people on Twitter.

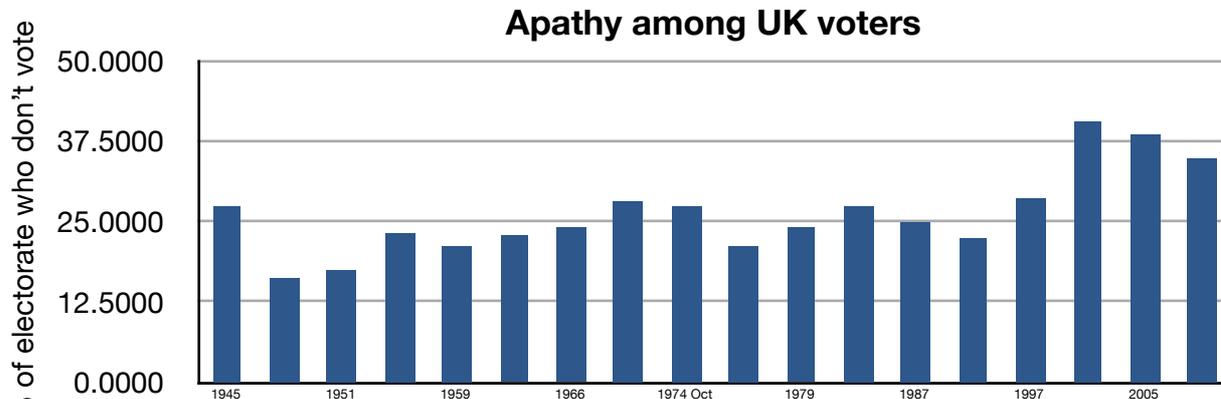
While front bench politicians, by virtue of frequent headlines, lots of column inches, national TV exposure and general media coverage can gather a lot of followers easily, for the mass of backbench MPs finding techniques for engaging with the electorate is an arduous process. But some have done it. Leading stars of the backbenches have been able to gain tens of thousands of followers and should stand as an inspiration to the rest of the House of Commons.

### **Indifferent politicians, indifferent electorate**

Why did Parliament Street decide to engage in a research project on the use of social media? There is one simple reason;

The electorate doesn't care about politics.

It is hard to disagree with this bleak assessment about politics in the United Kingdom. The 2012 local elections saw turnout at 32%, the lowest it has been since 2000 (a year before one of the lowest attended general elections of modern times)<sup>1</sup> People have made it clear; that they aren't interested in the political process. What is worse is that it is a gradually increasing trend. While apathy levels fluctuate from election to election, there is a clear, steady, long term increase in the percentage of people who won't vote.



**Source: Electoral Commission**

This is corrosive to our national life and something that has got to be remedied. Forcing people to vote, the preferred solution of some commentators, only tackles the symptom and not the cause of the problem.<sup>2</sup> Most people don't vote not because they have an objection to the process, but because they have an objection to the candidates they are being asked to choose from – an objection rooted in ideology or disinterest. They don't feel that the choice of candidates represent *them*, the most common complaint being that they feel that all the candidates are just as bad as each other. If we don't want to *force* people to vote, but *convince* them to vote we need to address this problem.

Why do we need to answer this question? Democracy requires and demands an engaged electorate. In the UK there is a particular need for more engaged general public as referenda become a more prominent feature of our political sphere. Direct democracy has a growing role to play in the United Kingdom, the country has just had a national vote on changing the electoral system, small referenda have taken place in the northern areas of England, Wales and Scotland with the promise of more in the near future. There is also a growing probability of a national vote on the UK's future relationship with the European Union. The need to make sure that we have an electorate who are engaged, interested and knowledgeable has never been more vital.

Yet despite this need for an engaged electorate, the UK has an electorate more disinterested in politics than ever before. The gap between the political elite and the electorate was most aggressively, and damningly, exposed and exacerbated when the expenses scandal hit in 2009. The news that politicians were using taxpayers money to pay for things that few could afford created a real disconnect between politicians and

<sup>1</sup> BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17946745>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.totalpolitics.com/blog/318208/itand39s-time-the-uk-had-compulsory-voting.thtml>

people. At the height of the scandal, according to the Hansard Society, 37% of the electorate said that they thought that our system of our governance had to be reformed.<sup>3</sup> By 2012 only 24% of people said that they approved of the UK's system of governance.<sup>4</sup>

Disinterest in politics continues today, and most disconcertingly these downward trends seem to be increasing. According to the Hansard Society, between 2011 and 2012 those who said that they were 'very' or 'fairly' interested in politics fell by 16 percentage points to 42% (the first time in the Hansard Society's audit history that interest is below 50%). At the same time those who say that they're certain not to vote has increased to 16%.<sup>5</sup> There has been a wealth of fascinating research trying to ascertain the reasons for why people feel that they don't have to vote.<sup>6</sup> A common theme that arises in academic reports and general responses to questions about apathy is an oft cited claim that politicians are 'out of touch'.

It is widely agreed that politicians, of all colours, are out of touch with the needs of modern Britain, something that is frequently mentioned by the politicians themselves.<sup>7</sup> All political parties are deemed to be distant, stuck in their own world, obsessed about Westminster or Brussels and not about everyday concerns that people are really interested in. A recent poll by Angus Reid found that 82% of people thought that the current Coalition government was not in touch with the concerns of ordinary people.<sup>8</sup>

This is not a new phenomenon; there's a justifiable claim that this is a feature of all democracies, perhaps all governments, for all time. It is worth remembering the words of Benjamin Disraeli (whose mind was always on politics) when he wrote "*There are two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets. The rich and the poor.*"<sup>9</sup> Ever since the advent of mass democracy politicians have attempted to show that they are 'in touch' with 'ordinary people'. Consider David Lloyd George, or Harold Wilson who attempted to cultivate images as champions of ordinary people.<sup>10,11</sup> More recently we have seen attempts by former Prime Minister Tony Blair to cultivate an image as an 'ordinary kind of guy' yet the image of the out-of-touch politician has endured.

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<sup>3</sup> Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement* 7 p.31

<sup>4</sup> Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement* 9 p. 19

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p. 17, p. 18

<sup>6</sup> An excellent summary and reference source for the best of these studies can be found at [http://otago.ourarchive.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/1456/voter\\_turnout.pdf](http://otago.ourarchive.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/1456/voter_turnout.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/nov/05/ed-miliband-business-finance-politics>

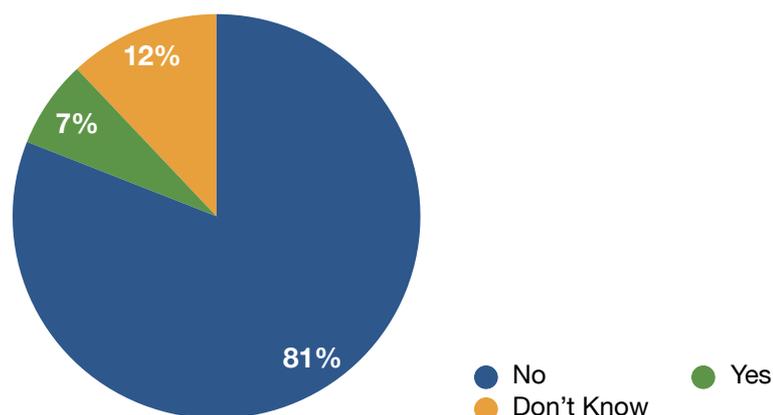
<sup>8</sup> [http://www.angus-reid.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2012.04.29\\_Express\\_BRI.pdf](http://www.angus-reid.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2012.04.29_Express_BRI.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> B. Disraeli, *Sybil*

<sup>10</sup> A. Marr *The Making of Modern Britain*

<sup>11</sup> A. Marr *The History of Modern Britain*

## Do Politicians understand the reality of family life?



**Source: Family Commission**

It is obvious that politics is seen as something alien to ordinary life. Our democracy needs politicians to be more engaged and better understood by the people that they wish to represent, and to crucially be seen by the electorate as people who understand the world beyond Westminster.

This requires new tactics for engaging with the electorate, it means using the new technology available for improving communication, namely, social media.

### Why social media?

Social media is the most effective way for politicians to engage with people and to show an interest in them. Why? Because it is where most people go to communicate. Over thirty million people, over half of the people in the UK are on Facebook<sup>12</sup>. In a report undertaken by Ofcom in 2010 it was found that the average UK Facebook user spent 6 hours and 30 minutes on the site during May 2010.<sup>13</sup> Two years ago social media accounted for 22.5% of our time online.<sup>14</sup> People consider it an extension of their lives with psychological reports claiming that the process is addictive.<sup>15</sup> Twitter has a similar effect with the websites founders expressing concern that users are spending too much time on the site.<sup>16</sup>

There is little doubt that the entertainment industry has successfully harnessed the power of social media. So have commercial interests. 29.5 million people follow Lady Gaga, 1.7m follow Katie Price. Their words arrive in the inbox of millions of people, who feel that they have a connection with the celebrity, who feel that they can directly message them. There is a real sense of connectivity. Celebrity spats with fans on Twitter make national news.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Facebook

<sup>13</sup> <http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2010/08/tv-phones-and-internet-take-up-almost-half-our-waking-hours/>

<sup>14</sup> BBC research

<sup>15</sup> Development of a Facebook Addiction scale, *Psychological Reports* Volume 110, 2012 pp. 201 - 517

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/feb/23/twitter-cofounder-biz-stone-tweeting-unhealthy>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/oct/31/stephen-fry-leave-twitter-fans>

Suddenly fans are in no doubt; there is a real connection between them and the people on TV. Suddenly, celebrities are no longer distant.

This mass online culture needs to be understood, and politicians who have attempted to engage with it should be celebrated. While over half of MPs use Twitter (331 at the start of the year) there is still a large minority of MPs who don't use it and a larger group still who don't use it *well*. Using Twitter effectively is not a simple process. There is a large number of MPs who have failed; many fail to gain over 5,000 users. Compared with other prominent figures, this is a dismally low figure. Many MPs need to improve their Twitter skills and improve their practice by learning from those who have mastered the art of social media.

If utilised properly there's no doubt that social media is a powerful tool. Such is the potential power of these websites that there are questions being asked in the national press about whether we should allow social media to play a much larger role in the political process. Social media means that we now have the technology, and the means, to operate the United Kingdom, viably, as a direct democracy with every decision decided by all the people via electronic votes.<sup>18</sup> While not an idea that appeals to the authors of this report, it neatly demonstrates the awesome potential of social media.

## How to use social media

Parliament Street has conducted research with Yatterbox to determine what techniques are the most effective for engaging with people on Twitter. Research conducted throughout September 2012 allowed researchers to determine which techniques work best for engaging with people and what techniques don't work.

Parliament Street commissioned Yatterbox to provide an aggregated breakdown of all MPs who use Twitter in September 2012. However rather than just looking at the difference between the *number* of Conservatives and Labour MPs using social media this paper aims to determine how *well* individual MPs are using it by looking into which MPs were able to amass the most followers on Twitter.

MPs were ranked according to the number of followers they had All front bench politicians were removed from the list so that only backbench politician's techniques could be investigated (the full list and a more detail criteria on who was excluded from the list is provided in appendix A). While Twitter follower numbers are always dynamic, the numbers were checked over September to make sure that there were no major variations and the final numbers from **23 September 2012** were used.

What is immediately obvious is that certain politicians have had significantly more success in gaining followers than others, by a very large margin. This report took the MPs with the most followers and then searched for common themes in all of these successful users. Successful politicians who attain high office gain a great deal of attention on Twitter, studying them offers little reward. We wish to know how ordinary MPs – including backbenchers and ministers - can better engage with their electorate. (A full description of politicians removed from the list is provided at the end of this report)

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-19555756>

The ten most successful MPs;

Name	No. of followers	Party
Tom Watson	92,518	Labour
Steve Rotheram	18,745	Labour
David Lammy	17,821	Labour
Kerry McCarthy	16,096	Labour
Zac Goldsmith	15,075	Conservative
Luciana Berger	14,864	Labour
Tom Harris	14,660	Labour
Ed Vaizey	14,469	Conservative
Gloria De Piero	12,423	Labour
Jeremy Corbyn	11,583	Labour

While the average number of followers for all MPs was 3,936, for the top ten MPs it was 22,825 (even without Tom Watson the average top nine is 15,082). What is obvious is that an online personality has to be cultivated over time and that MPs should frequently attend to their online followers. While it would be a mistake to assume that there are 'golden rules' that can allow MPs to replicate this success easily, those aiming to increase their number of followers clearly have much to learn from these top performing MPs and should seek to learn from them. That said there does seem to be a few common trends that can be deduced from a month's observation;

### **Be successful as a backbench MP**

It's no surprise that Tom Watson dominates the list by a huge margin. His role on the Culture, Media and Sports select committee and powerful oratory in the House of Commons on topical issues has earned him a great deal of attention. MPs who have a powerful personality, and a powerful ability to represent their constituents and to hold the executive and prominent figures to account go a long way to making people look for them on Twitter. Five of the top ten are on select committees, five are also ministers/shadow ministers. Watson also benefits from being deputy chair of the Labour Party while three of the others benefit from being ministers or shadow ministers.

Discussing your actions on Twitter is also a successful way of building on this reputation. The prominent MPs include responses to political questions, and engage in brief - though passionate - political debates.

## CASE STUDY:

*@tom\_watson: According to the Sun newspaper, Watson is a fundamentalist zealot who denounces any deviation from socialism. Also author of a book on corruption by NewsCorp.*

### **Update regularly.**

Visiting these twitter profiles, there is always something new to see. New updates with opinions on the latest news. This is what having a politician in real time means. Some of the top ten had up to 40 Tweets in one day alone. (Kevin McCarthy) There is no doubt about their commitment or their openness. On each day of observation in September the vast majority of the MPs had updated at least once in the preceding 24 hours (the most notable exception for this rule was Ed Vaizey). All ten also uploaded photos.

### **Retweet and answer questions**

Conversations with the electorate are now possible in real time thanks to Twitter. These exchanges are, by necessity, brief. However, some MPs have offered retweets of interesting links and material. Retweeting other people's posts and interesting sites was something that all of the top ten MPs did on a regular basis.

## CASE STUDY:

*@lucianaberger: Thanks all who came to #lucianalistens this morning. issues raised: universal credit, bedroom tax, NHS, energy prices, tax avoidance, GCSEs*

*@nimmrodd: Hey @lucianaberger perhaps hashtag LucianaListens should become hashtag LuciLis or hashtag LucyLiss.*

*@lucianaberger: @nimmrodd doesn't really have the same ring to it/not easily decipherable...*

### **Offer links**

Asking other Twitter users to sign up to petitions is possible via Twitter. Offering links and a brief description allows users to understand quickly what is going on and feel empowered by your feed. All obvious marks of a good politician and were spotted among most of the top ten Twitter performers.

## CASE STUDY

*@jeremycorbyn: Help stop the drone wars. Sign the petition: <http://tiny.cc/crf0jw>*

### **Be funny and normal!**

The best tweeters all mix politics and ordinary life. Retweets of political news are intermingled with reflections on drinking soft drinks and cooking food. The tone is nearly always informal and have a range of amusing observations on everyday life. There is a real tendency not to obsess about politics and make it the be-all-or-end-all and a healthy interest in other topics. This all helped create a 'normal' image, a good example being Tom Harris who changed his background to the TARDIS from Doctor Who during September!

## CASE STUDY

*@edvaizey: Bond producer Michael Wilson explains why the UK a great place to make films; also showed clip of new Bond film Skyfall, on web at 2pm*

**CONCLUSION ONE - All top Twittering MPs are savvy Twitter users who know how to engage with people, do so frequently and cultivate a 'normal persona.'**

This is further supported when one looks at the least successful MPs who between them averaged 164 followers;

Name	No. of followers	Party
Dai Havard	56	Labour
Edward Leigh	95	Conservative
Ben Wallace	101	Conservative
Mark Hendrick	103	Labour
Nick Smith	142	Labour
Paul Beresford	182	Conservative
Madeleine Moon	216	Labour
Stephen McPartland	227	Conservative
Paul Goggins	227	Labour
David Davies	291	Conservative

One had not tweeted at all (Dai Havard) while others were spasmodic when updating their Twitter pages, sometimes going for several weeks without a tweet. Some had started to branch into humorous tweets, however they tend to focus on one particular area such as referring to political shows such as *The Thick of It*, not subjects that most people can access. Some were simply feeds from *Hansard*. Some didn't even have a profile photo. This all strikes as a real lack of engagement with the public and a lack of interest.

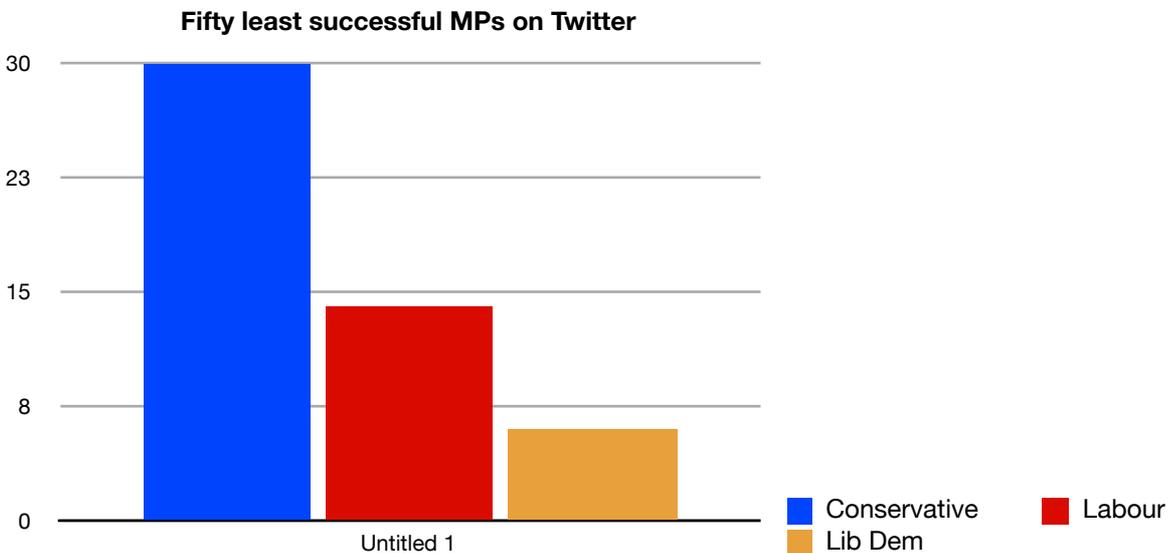
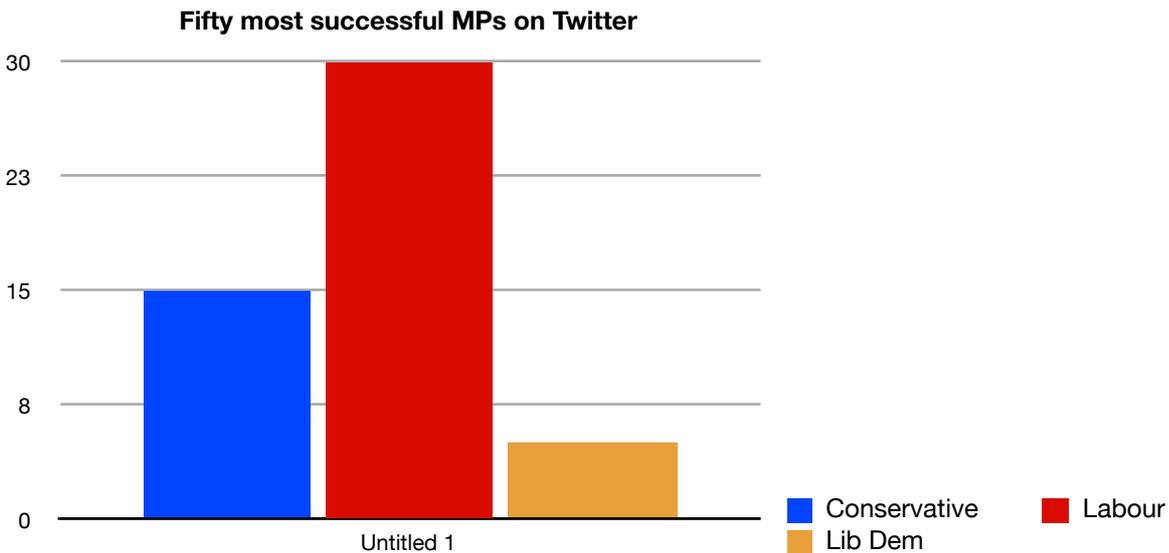
Some did manage to meet the points above such as retweeting interesting stories, but usually in isolation and rarely continued to do it frequently.

While it is clear that while being a prominent political figure and being well known via the national press helps to amass Twitter followers this is also not the main driver of success. Some of the most prominent politicians out there failed to amass a lot of followers with all of the following failing to get above the average score;

Name	No. of followers
Peter Lilley	607
Oliver Letwin	941
Jack Straw	1,175
Simon Hughes	1,745

**CONCLUSION TWO - Being successful and well known via TV does not guarantee Twitter success.**

It is clear that there is a distinct party bias in terms of MPs who use Twitter the most successfully in an analysis of the fifty best, and worst Parliamentary tweeters (determined by number of followers).



## Case Study: Local Government

*Aware that politics isn't limited to Westminster, Parliament Street also asked Councillor Paul Deach, from Surrey Heath Borough Council, a noted champion and successful user of social media to prepare a report on what he considered to be good practice in the local area;*

The one thing all politicians are accused of is being out of touch. In more cases than not, this is probably true. It is impossible for every politician to be fully up to speed on every issue and be in touch with all the views of constituents across the broad range of social and economic factors across communities.

However, never has there been a time when politicians, decision makers, local authorities, government and the business sector have had such effective tools at their disposal than now.

I was elected as a local authority councillor in May 2011. So I am very new to the political scene. However, I have been using social media in my community since 2003.

This has made me very accessible to local residents and allows me to be plugged into the community and be in touch with issues that have developed in neighbouring villages and so spreading my accessibility.

But by the time Facebook and Twitter came along I was already fully aware of the power of social media and the advantages and disadvantages it brings.

I often hear from people who are unwilling to embrace social media, that it does not beat face to face communication. I actually agree with that and it should not ever replace that. However, I have often found that social media can help facilitate a face to face introduction that would have never otherwise happened. So I view social media as a way to augment face to face interaction with members of my community.

My tool of choice is without a doubt Twitter. I love it's simplicity. However, I believe that it is that simplicity that many people struggle with. If people who start with Facebook and then go on to sign up with Twitter probably expect to much from Twitter.

I think they sub consciously think it will do all the things that Facebook does, yet in reality it does a fraction of the things Facebook can do. That's why it is called a "micro blog".

If you want to get off to a flying start with Twitter the best thing to do is just follow people you are interested in first and see how they interact with other Twitter users. It will also help you a lot to get your head around the four basic commands:

- The Mention - @
- The Retweet - RT
- The Direct Message - D:
- The Hash Tag #

Like most new innovations, it is fear that can put some people off. There has been a lot of adverse media about the use of Twitter, such as with celebrities. I have learnt the hard way

that you must never post something on a social network that you would not say to a journalist, in an email or in a letter. Because it will come back to bite you on the behind and very quickly at that.

Also don't be fooled into thinking that you can delete a tweet and so minimising the reach of said tweet. There are a number of ways in which deleted tweets can come back to haunt you. So there are a few golden rules to stick by when posting to any social media:

The written word can be so easily misinterpreted and even more so when you have to say what you want to say in 140 characters or less. So be very clear to avoid misunderstandings.

Like you should never drink and drive, never drink and post to social media.

Try not to respond to situations or remarks emotionally. If something posted on social media makes you angry, sleep on it before you post a response.

If you want to solicit a response to something you post, especially if the content matter is controversial then be sure you know how to defend your position. Going silent to something you have initiated will undo a lot of hard work.

Think very carefully before blocking someone on Twitter or Facebook. Just because someone openly criticises you or disagrees with you is not a good reason to block them. As you know, sometimes you will never change the opinion of some people no matter what you say, but you can change the opinions of people who are casually observing your online conversations.

Never get into a slanging match online. Keep it professional. It is not just the person you are getting into a slanging match with who is observing, everyone who is following you will see. Kill them with kindness is a good benchmark to go by.

I speak to lots of people who use social media who are very hung up on the amount of followers they have. As in many facets of life it's not the quantity but the quality that is important and the same is true with your followers.

In your line of work, engagement is the most important element of your use of social media and the reach it has within your constituency. You can just use your social media as a one way communication tool. So just tweet but never respond to tweets aimed at you. I would advise against this but it is better than not having a social media presence at all. I would advise that you proactively seek to engage and often initiate discussions with your constituents. A good way to do this is to do a search on Twitter. So in my ward I could search #Deepcut. Doing this would bring up every tweet in order of the most recent tweet that has the word Deepcut in it. You can then decide which ones are from people who are living in Deepcut or who have an interest in Deepcut.

Another useful tool that Twitter offers is lists. As you start to engage people on Twitter it can become quite mind boggling remembering who is a constituent and who is not. So it is useful to set up a list and when you have ascertain that someone is a constituent you can add them to that list. You can make your list private or public but remember that you may have taken years to build up a list of local constituents so by making your list public means that any political opponents can tap into that list just as soon as they join Twitter and therefore you have done all the hard work for them. The other way of looking at it though is open discussion about local issues is healthy and if by making your list public helps

facilitate those discussions this is actually a really good thing? It can also help you get followers and supporters.

As on any golf course, a social network has an etiquette that if you abide by will make for a smooth existence in your cyber world. To put this into context, if you were on a panel of guest speakers and one of the members of that panel mentioned you in a positive light, it is within the realms of social etiquette for you to thank them for the mention by acknowledging it in some way. The same goes for Twitter or Facebook. If someone mentions you, try and acknowledge that mention in some way even if it is with just a simple "thanks".

Finally a good tool to measure how engaged your social network is and your social media influence is KLOUT.

KLOUT is a free online service that uses an algorithm to measure your social media activity and gives it a score based on your level of engagement and who you influence on your social networks. I mentioned before that it is not the quantity of your followers that is important but the quality of your followers and by that I mean as an MP for Watford, what purpose does having a sex shop in Auckland following you have? So as a councillor in Surrey Heath having local followers is important to me and the more local followers I have that either engage with me or vice versa, that retweet content I put out, that mentions me will increase my KLOUT Score.

At the time of writing, I have over 700 followers and growing daily. Not a huge amount in the grand scheme of things, but most are local people who I routinely engage with or have had some form of engagement with some time in the past. Consequently I have quite a high KLOUT score. 55 at the time of writing. According to KLOUT I influence 673 other social network users.

Below are some screen shots of some of the interactions I have had on my social networks. they speak for themselves.

So my advise to you is. unless you already have a huge profile due to you being a cabinet minister or are prepared to sell your soul on Big Brother, Get your head around social media or get left behind. Remember, the riots were orchestrated via social networks and foreign governments have been overthrown via Twitter and Facebook. You can reach members of your community that you would not normally reach using social networks. That includes the socially excluded and young people who are very poorly represented in the community.

Work loads are ever increasing. The economic climate and unemployment will only increase your case files which means less time at grass roots. As business's look towards technology to make them more efficient, there is no reason why we can't do the same. I still believe there are plenty of politicians out there who are doing it for the right reasons. I am doing it to be able to make a difference and touch people's lives. Social media allows me to engage the kind of people who would not normally turn up to a surgery, a public meeting or a community event.

## **Conclusion**

This report doesn't intend to explain apathy, and certainly doesn't seek to claim that social media on its own will reverse apathetic tendencies. It does however view the growing apathetic tendencies of the UK as an intrinsic threat to the long term prospects of our

democratic system and believes that any attempt to engage with the electorate is a self-evident good.

It does seem that the successful utilization of social media helps to break down the poor image politicians have of being aloof and divorced from the real world. The sheer run away success of some backbench MPs shows that there is a large, and growing, number of people who are ready to listen to MPs so long as they are accessible and interesting. The challenge facing MPs is to make sure that they use social media in such a way as to show these qualities.

Social media is a powerful tool, but too many MPs are failing to engage with it in an effective or sensible manner. Learning from those who use it well, engaging with people, retweeting and seeming to be 'normal' could go a long way to reversing the damage that the appearance of being distant and alien is doing to our democracy.

What is needed is not a uniform Twitter policy, but a real engagement with Twitter. MPs need to spend time on social media sites, learning the 'tricks of the trade' and learning from those who use these sites well. There need to be discussions between MPs about how they use Twitter and other forms of social media. Regular meeting should be held to discuss how to use social media and to exchange ideas about good practice – the only hope is for a real culture change within the halls of Westminster when it comes to social media. Twitter shouldn't be seen as something just to 'do' but as a vital component of engaging with the people.

If MPs heed this lesson and start to ask questions about how they can use Twitter more effectively and start to become more successful we should see more people engaging with politicians; receiving updates and talking to their elected representatives. That can only be a good thing for our democracy.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

All data was provided by Yatterbox and Twitter. MPs data was uploaded and then passed through a filter; all names that were former or current holders of high office (definition; former/current party leader or deputy leader, candidates for party leadership, Secretary of State/Shadow Secretary of State, Chairman of the 1922 Committee, Party President) were removed. Ministers were not removed owing to their relative media obscurity in comparison to Secretaries of State and deputy chairs were permitted for the same reason.

Averages provided are always the mean. Results were not weighted so as to emphasise the sheer disparity between the most successful MPs and the least successful.

### **List of MPs**

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Dai Havard	56
Edward Leigh	95
Ben Wallace	101

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Mark Hendrick	103
Nick Smith	142
Paul Beresford	182
Madeleine Moon	216
Stephen McPartland	227
Paul Goggins	227
David Davies	291
Jessica Lee	298
Richard Drax	302
Mark Lancaster	399
John Stevenson	408
Yvonne Fovargue	412
Gavin Williamson	441
Craig Whittaker	473
Craig Whittaker	473
Paul Uppal	521
Mark Hunter	552
Graham Allen	556
Mark Pawsey	569
Graham Evans	609
Simon Reeve	698

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Michael McCann	700
Karen Bradley	741
Phillip Lee	787
John Hemming	838
Mark Lazarowicz	838
Gordon Birtwistle	839
David Morris	901
Fiona Mactaggart	935
Chris Skidmore	943
George Hollingbery	960
John Penrose	1,053
Matthew Offord	1,071
James Morris	1,118
David Ward	1,154
Clive Betts	1,176
Tessa Munt	1,178
Andrew Bingham	1,181
Rushanara Ali	1,182
Roger Godsiff	1,215
Caroline Nokes	1,217
Mike Freer	1,341
Mark Spencer	1,343

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Mark Williams	1,348
Glyn Davies	1,352
Michael Ellis	1,376
John Robertson	1,382
Tony Baldry	1,405
Simon Kirby	1,463
Malcolm Wicks	1,471
Peter Aldous	1,471
Mark Garnier	1,516
Rosie Cooper	1,575
Julie Hilling	1,606
Simon Danczuk	1,613
Justin Tomlinson	1,632
Glenda Jackson	1,641
Annette Brooke	1,644
Ian Lucas	1,658
Andrew Bridgen	1,659
Heather Wheeler	1,684
Iain Stewart	1,729
Simon Hughes	1,745
Ian Swales	1,760
Russell Brown	1,767

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Andrew Rosindell	1,767
Andrew Selous	1,805
Pauline Latham	1,808
Stephen Williams	1,833
Paul Maynard	1,853
Graham Jones	1,855
Stephen Mosley	1,881
Andrew Griffiths	1,882
Anne-Marie Morris	1,890
Gerald Howarth	1,962
Anne Milton	1,982
Malcolm Bruce	2,021
Jonathan Djanogly	2,024
Chris White	2,062
Heidi Alexander	2,105
Alec Shelbrooke	2,141
Adam Afriyie	2,148
Adrian Sanders	2,153
Linda Riordan	2,160
George Freeman	2,166

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Jonathan Edwards	2,195
David Burrowes	2,224
Ian Lavery	2,226
Kwasi Kwarteng	2,243
Chris Pincher	2,270
Sheryll Murray	2,306
Yasmin Qureshi	2,310
Alistair Carmichael	2,346
Geraint Davies	2,359
Alex Cunningham	2,369
James Duddridge	2,386
Andrew Percy	2,388
Rob Wilson	2,394
Laura Sandys	2,411
Jim Sheridan	2,422
Robert Buckland	2,428
Nicola Blackwood	2,445
Damian Hinds	2,452
Geoffrey Cox	2,452
Karl McCartney	2,469
Pat Glass	2,470
David Mundell	2,473

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Richard Harrington	2,485
Sarah Wollaston	2,515
Gregg McClymont	2,524
Michael Moore	2,525
Angela Smith	2,533
Chloe Smith	2,535
Andrea Leadsom	2,567
Conor Burns	2,586
John Mann	2,610
Alun Cairns	2,636
Steve Brine	2,642
Cathy Jamieson	2,695
Richard Burden	2,696
John Glen	2,719
Peter Luff	2,744
Fabian Hamilton	2,782
Jake Berry	2,823
John Spellar	2,868
Stuart Andrew	2,894
Helen Grant	2,981
Michelle Gildernew	3,019
Brooks Newmark	3,058

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Charlie Elphicke	3,118
Richard Benyon	3,129
Dan Byles	3,139
Tony Lloyd	3,172
Martin Horwood	3,183
Andrew Stephenson	3,185
Mary Macleod	3,211
Nicky Morgan	3,222
Anas Sarwar	3,251
Jon Cruddas	3,254
James Brokenshire	3,312
Karen Buck	3,353
Chris Williamson	3,390
John Leech	3,409
Gemma Doyle	3,412
Chris Heaton-Harris	3,420
Karl Turner	3,421
Mark Reckless	3,474
Ian Murray	3,539
Louise Ellman	3,551
Graham Stuart	3,572
Nick Hurd	3,600

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Steve McCabe	3,608
Brandon Lewis	3,623
David Wright	3,635
Gavin Barwell	3,676
Bill Esterson	3,693
Mike Gapes	3,734
Sam Gyimah	3,776
Conor Murphy	3,793
Catherine Mckinnell	3,796
Jason McCartney	3,799
Duncan Hames	3,822
Michael Meacher	3,862
Stewart Jackson	3,930
Damian Collins	3,971
Virendra Sharma	4,021
Pamela Nash	4,026
Tom Greatrex	4,046
Huw Irranca-Davies	4,096
Margot James	4,100
Andrew George	4,100
Alison Seabeck	4,135
Philip Davies	4,186

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Harriett Baldwin	4,193
Jenny Chapman	4,281
Barry Gardiner	4,344
Sharon Hodgson	4,374
Claire Perry	4,406
Michael Fabricant	4,419
Steve Webb	4,430
Stephen Gilbert	4,433
Lilian Greenwood	4,452
Tom Brake	4,474
Emma Reynolds	4,518
Paul Burstow	4,620
Margaret Hodge	4,644
Anne Begg	4,700
Elizabeth Truss	4,725
Therese Coffey	4,732
Graeme Morrice	4,739
Grahame Morris	4,742
Nadhim Zahawi	4,762
Tracey Crouch	4,785

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Don Foster	4,833
Tom Blenkinsop	4,862
Pat McFadden	4,907
Gavin Shuker	4,982
Esther McVey	5,060
Debbie Abrahams	5,135
Paul Flynn	5,170
Toby Perkins	5,190
Bridget Phillipson	5,205
Robert Halfon	5,213
Nick de Bois	5,280
David Hanson	5,358
Lisa Nandy	5,549
Diana Johnson	5,642
Kate Green	5,671
Matthew Hancock	5,723
Gisela Stuart	5,884
Andy Slaughter	5,907
Eric Joyce	5,936
Greg Hands	6,199
Aidan Burley	6,339
Andrew Gwynne	6,343
Michael Dugher	6,359

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Greg Mulholland	6,435
Dan Jarvis	6,504
Jonathan Reynolds	6,693
Tim Loughton	6,905
John Woodcock	7,280
Greg Knight	7,680
Kevin Brennan	7,720
Jesse Norman	7,742
Alison McGovern	7,883
Julian Huppert	8,002
Tristram Hunt	8,545
Jamie Reed	8,697
Jo Swinson	9,740
Douglas Carswell	9,829
John McDonnell	10,069
Nadine Dorries	10,388
Lynne Featherstone	10,464
Rory Stewart	10,580
Jeremy Corbyn	11,583
Gloria De Piero	12,423
Ed Vaizey	14,469

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of followers</b>
Tom Harris	14,660
Luciana Berger	14,864
Zac Goldsmith	15,075
Kerry McCarthy	16,096
David Lammy	17,821
Steve Rotheram	18,745
Tom Watson	92,518