Gov.UK domain - Website & E-mail report

Summary

The current website is difficult to navigate, and the Council have been mainly reliant on updates being carried out by a local provider. Current Clerk can update the existing word-press website text and add blog posts and news items however does not have access to amend menus. The current design incorporates some complex elements that will either be more time consuming or costly to edit.

Kim Bedford, Internal Auditor commented on her difficulties navigating our website and would recommend the Council considers the layout and accessibility of the website and would encourage the Council to adopt a transparency code as good practice.

Many local Councils have adopted more collaborative ways of working using Microsoft 365 to digitally transform. Council email addresses with a central database will improve information security and allow more efficient ways of working.

Recommendations / Considerations

1. To set up a gov.uk domain name in line with best practice:

   waterorton-pc.gov.uk **or** waterortonparishcouncil.gov.uk

2. To consider new website which is fully compliant with the Website Accessibility Requirements

3. To consider adoption of Microsoft 365 for Parish Councillors

Background

Guidance[1] regarding the use of gov.uk domain names states that a parish council must use a geographical identifier users will recognise and the suffix parishcouncil.gov.uk or -pc.gov.uk. The two options possible are listed in the recommendations above, further guidance on Gov.UK domains is available from the CDDO (Central Digital and Data Office)[i].

It is recommended that Councils use gov.uk domains as .org domains (charities and non-profits) and .co or .com domains (commercial organisations) are not appropriate for Councils of any size. Nominet, the UK domain management organisation support this view.

JPAG are responsible for issuing proper practices about the governance and accounts of smaller authorities. Our internal and external auditors assess our standards of governance against the practitioners' guide[2] produced by JPAG annually.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-your-govuk-domain-name?step-by-step-nav=5a9309a3-9a80-4faa-b24f-1797023e897f

[2] file (nalc.gov.uk)

The Practitioners' Guide was updated in March 2021 to clarify the importance of smaller authorities using secure email systems and GOV.UK and this advice has been reiterated in March 2022[3]. The guidance regarding emails and domains is not mandatory however is considered best practice.

Jisc guidance around gov.uk domain names mean that the Council must use this domain for emails as well as the website.

Finance and Value for money

There is around £550 remaining in the website budget for 2022-23 and £1,000 in the budget for 2023-24. By investing in a website which is easy to update the Council will save in staffing resources. All residents and visitors will benefit from being able to readily access information on the website and increased transparency.

Parish Council Websites:

Pricing - Parish Council Websites

Basic package: £569 one off set-up fee
Complete Package: £749 one off set-up fee
Extended package: £929 one off set-up fee

Plus £120 Domain Registration Fee per website (includes first 2 years then £88 for renewal fees every 2 year) and £19 per month hosting & support per Council (£228 per annum) IMAP email accounts are included in this if complete or extended package website package chosen. Also offer Microsoft 365 as an option (additional fees would apply)

Parish Online:

Parish Online - Website Hosting Service - Local Council website package using modern, accessible and responsive GOV.UK design standards (parish-online.co.uk)

Parish Online Websites	Domain Costs & Hosting	TOTAL (per annum)
£390	included	£390

[3] The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK 5.204. All authorities except Parish meetings must now have an official website. To comply with GDPR, councils should provide official email accounts for their councillors as well as for their Clerk and other officers. 5.205. When choosing a domain name for the council's website and emails, many local council websites are appropriately making use of the official GOV.UK domain (for example, ourparishcouncil.gov.uk), with email addresses being linked to that domain. 5.206. Using a GOV.UK domain for your council website and email accounts demonstrates the council's official local government status. Members of the public are increasingly cyber security aware, so a GOV.UK domain can also help to build trust, credibility 56 and visibly demonstrates authenticity. Many people will now reasonably expect a local council to have a GOV.UK domain name. 5.207. For the purposes of user management, councils should ensure that the Proper Officer can add and remove member and staff email accounts. Commercial 'dashboard' email and web systems offer centralised searching of all data contained within the system for effective compliance with GDPR Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests.

- Prices above are excluding VAT. The pricing represents an early adopter discount which will be retained in each renewal year.
- The subscription includes the build, hosting, ongoing maintenance, SSL certificate, support, and the cost of the gov.uk domain.
- Websites can be ready in 2 weeks.

Aubergine:

Parish Council Websites | Town Council Websites (aubergine262.com)

One off costs to set up website	£700
Domain Costs (Annual)	£100
Annual hosting & support	£199
Total 1st year	**£1099**
Total from 2nd year onwards	**£299 per annum**

Microsoft 365:

Many Local Councils now use Microsoft 365 costs are:

£9.40 per user / per month for Business Standard (for Clerk – 12 months = £112.80 – purchased Feb 23
£4.50 per user / per month for Business Basic (for Councillors - 12 months = £54 each)

Based on 1 Officer & 9 Councillors = £598.80 per annum

Web Apps included:

✓ Microsoft Outlook
✓ Microsoft Word
✓ Microsoft Excel
✓ Microsoft PowerPoint
✓ Microsoft Publisher (PC only)
✓ Microsoft Access (PC only)

Services included:

✓ Exchange
✓ Microsoft OneDrive cloud storage
✓ Microsoft SharePoint
✓ Microsoft Teams

Officers would have access to additional applications**Error! Bookmark not defined.** above those available on Apps for Business and would benefit from being able to work more collaboratively with Councillors.

Additional Services:

✓ Exchange
✓ Microsoft SharePoint
✓ Microsoft Teams

Risk Management Issues

It is a legal requirement for all public authorities to have a WCAG 2.1 AA Compliant website.

Due to the council falling between the two Transparency Code requirements (one code for Councils with income/expenditure less than £25,000 & another code for Councils with income / expenditure above £200,000) there is not a legal requirement however it is considered best practice to adopt one of the Transparency Codes regardless.

Information security will be improved by adopting a centrally managed email system and FOI / DSAR requests will be better managed. In addition, a functional website should reduce FOI requests if PC can include information from the Publication Scheme on the website as a matter of course.

In the new Council term, should there be changes to the membership any licenses purchased can be re-assigned to any newly elected Councillors.

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[i] Further guidance regarding the process of setting up gov.uk domains from the CDDO (Central Digital and Data Office) can be found here:
Benefits of getting a .gov.uk domain
Choose a good supplier for your .gov.uk domain
Identify a domain name administrator
How you are accountable for protecting your .gov.uk domain name
What to do if your domain name is compromised
Apply for a .gov.uk domain name: step by step - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Get started with your .gov.uk domain