

A Parish Council Website to comply with Accessibility Legislation

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites & Mobile Applications No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, came into force in late 2018. Its aim is to ensure public sector websites and mobile apps are accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities.

As a simple guide, to comply with these accessibility guidelines, a public body must have:

- A WCAG 2.1 AA rated compliant website by Sept 2020.
- An Accessibility Policy Statement following a standard format by Sept 2020.
- An Accessible Documents statement, following a standard format by Sept 2020.
- A process to regularly monitor & review the website.
- A process to provide requests for content that is not in a compliant format.

A couple of points to be considered:-

The Government advise that public sector organisations use a .gov.uk or other government domain name for their websites, emails and services. Regarding names, best practice dictates using parishname-pc.gov.uk, nameparishcouncil.gov.uk or town council-tc.gov.uk. It makes it easier for users to gauge the authenticity of the public sector website.

Separate email accounts are recommended for Councillors - The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) gives rights of public access to information held by public authorities. If Councillors use their private email addresses to conduct Council business this could become difficult if a request is made by a member of the public for Council communication.

Please look at the summary of the three quotes I have obtained below:-

Aubergine is the website offered by the Society of Local Council Clerks -

<https://www.slcc.co.uk/discount/wcag-2-1-compliant-websites-by-aubergine/>

- **Year 1 total set up and running cost (with secure hosting & basic support) £899 + VAT**
- **Year 2 total cost (with secure hosting & basic support) £199 + VAT**

This doesn't include a planning portal, domain registration or individual Councillor email addresses or transfer of existing website to new website. These can all be provided at additional costs (see link above).

Teec appear to be a smaller provider who are in the process of setting up a new website for Tisbury PC – <https://myparishcouncil.co.uk/>

- **Year 1 £780 + VAT to host and move existing website to new template.**
- **Ongoing hosting costs £120pa.**

This doesn't include a .gov domain but does include separate Councillor email addresses and transfer of existing website to new website. Teec will make sure that all transferred content from the old website is accessible.

Eyelid Productions has provided compliant websites for a vast number of Parish Councils - <https://eyelidproductions.co.uk/wordpress-websites-for-parish-councils/>

This includes a planning portal (link to Local planning authority), a ".gov" domain and individual councillor email addresses. Also uses a wordpress template for the website which is a well-known and well supported control management system. Eyelid will not make transferred content Accessible.

- Year 1 total set up £920 + VAT, includes hosting and a ".gov" domain
- Year 2 £180 + VAT
- Year 3 £270 + VAT (.gov domain has to be renewed every two years and costs £90+VAT)

Existing Website - Alternatively, the PC website could be kept with the current provider, Hugo Fox. The website was originally set up with a free template and the PC currently pay nothing for hosting. Hugo Fox have confirmed that they have made changes to their content management system (the website template) to make it accessible. If this option is chosen it would be down to the clerk to audit all the content on the existing website. The Clerk would need to make each document accessible where possible and prepare an accessibility statement for the website which explains what is accessible, what isn't and that the clerk can be contacted if a specific document is required in an accessible format. If Councillors are interested in this option, the clerk will require more time to find out how to check different types of document and ascertain how much work is involved.