

PRESTON UNDER SCAR PARISH COUNCIL

20 JUNE 2024

REPORT BY: THE CLERK

**MODERNISING THE PARISH COUNCIL'S WEBSITE AND POSSIBLE
MIGRATION TO GOV.UK DOMAIN NAME AND USE OF GOV.UK EMAIL
ADDRESSES FOR PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS**

Modernising the Council's website

At the Parish Council Meeting on 19 March 2024, Councillors approved in principle the modernisation of the current website and agreed to further consider the future content and design at the next meeting. I was asked to provide Councillors with links to other websites hosted by the Council's existing provider.

Links were subsequently provided to a number of websites, using the different formats currently available from the existing provider.

The basic cost for a redesign of the current website by the existing provider would be **£180.00**. This would provide the following pages:

Homepage

Councillors details

Minutes, Meetings and Agendas

Finance

Documents

Contact Page

Additional pages/features can be included at an additional cost (Councillors have previously indicated that consideration should be given to making the site a village website to which residents could contribute and that a separate Biodiversity page could also be included)

The current provider (Town and Parish websites) has confirmed that the framework of the website is compliant with the new accessibility standard WCAG 2.2 AA which comes into force later this year.

The Fee for web hosting and maintenance for 2023/24 was **£170**.

Other potential providers include:

Active Council (based in Bedale) are currently offering a "Lite" version of their Council website software for smaller Councils (less than 7 seats) at a discounted price of **£199** plus VAT (a saving of £149 on the current full price of £349 plus VAT). Examples of Parish websites which Active Council has provided have been sent to Councillors separately. Their current annual support charge is **£149**.

Aubergine have been working with the Yorkshire Local Councils Association to set up a new local low-cost web platform for smaller parishes in Yorkshire: www.yorkshireparishes.gov.uk

The aim of the platform is to provide small parishes with a simple and accessibility regulation compliant framework so that they can publish their regulatory information and content about the parish council and its activities at a very low cost, whilst benefiting from having a [.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) address and meeting the accessibility & transparency requirements. Parishes on this website are for members of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association only.

The site is intended to provide an easy-to-use website admin tool for Councils to publish:

- Agendas & Minutes
- Finance & AGAR documents
- Councillors profiles and Register Of Interests (ROIs)
- Documents & policies section
- Contact page & enquiry form
- Community & local info pages
- Accessibility Statement & privacy policy section
- Compliant cookie controller
- Meets WCAG2.1AA & WCAG2.2AA accessibility compliance
- Fully mobile responsive
- Free training sessions at the start and each month
- Access to the Website Learning Centre & video library
- Support from council sector experts
- Full maintained and kept up to date with the required regulations
- a [.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) domain free for 1st year via Cabinet Office £100 grant

The new YLCA Parishes website platform www.yorkshireparishes.gov.uk aims to provide those small parishes with very small precepts (under £10k) access to a legally compliant website presence that's easy to use and update and provides all the pages needed to meet Transparency requirements and serve their parish.

Parishes can have either a custom domain on the platform, e.g www.yorkshireparishes.gov.uk/yourparishname or a new [.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) domain through the Cabinet Office [.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) domain grant scheme. Existing domains can also be used to point to the platform.

Costs are as follows:

Year one build and set up - **£299 + VAT**, Year 2 onwards **£199 + VAT** (plus any domain renewal fees that may fall due)

The cost of setting up a new individual website for the Council (ie independent of the Yorkshire parishes platform) would be **£499 plus VAT**. This includes a one off set up and build, annual subscription, SSL hosting and support, free gov.uk domain for 2

years, 1 year of content and 5 years of AGAR documents transferred. Thereafter the annual fee for hosting etc is £199 plus VAT.

Councillors are requested to consider how they wish to progress this further i.e.

- **whether or not to continue with the current webhost (with a modernised site) or move to a new host**
- **what additional pages/features should now be included**

Migration to gov.uk domain name

There is currently a drive to encourage Parish Councils to migrate to a .Gov.uk domain as these have a number of benefits both in terms of security and in the professionalism of their websites.

A gov.uk domain name:

- Shows services, emails and websites are from a trusted UK public sector organisation such as a town or parish council.
- Means a website could potentially show up higher in search results.
- Allows staff to join public sector communities which require a .gov.uk email address
- Is monitored for potential security vulnerabilities, which will be reported to the Council concerned by the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Domain Management Team.
- Gives an organisation the ability to better control email accounts by removing staff when they leave.
- Gives a domain better legal protection because it's based in a UK jurisdiction.
- Means outgoing emails are more likely to be cleared by security filters and delivered to recipients.
- Increases transparency of smaller organisations when staff use corporate email accounts instead of personal email accounts for official government business.
- Helps smaller organisations fulfil best practice guidelines as outlined in the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide 2024

Use of a gov.uk domain name and email addresses is not currently a legal requirement but is recognised as best practice and this is likely to be reflected in future editions of the Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guidance. It is thought likely that within the next few years it will become mandatory.

The current requirements for a council to use a .gov.uk domain are:

- website must meet WCAG2.1AA website accessibility compliance guidelines. At the time of writing that standard is WCAG2.1AA and will change to

WCAG2.2AA in October 2024. (Note: The Council's current website is compliant with the new standard.

- The clerk must have domain-based email. This means that I would not be able to continue to operate from the current Gmail address once the Council has moved over. A .gov.uk domain cannot be used just for an email service – if you have a .gov.uk domain you must also use it for your website.
- the contact details must be kept up to date.
- the registrar or CDDO must be notified when the domain is no longer in use.
- The website host must have an SSL security certificate and meet current GDPR compliance
- The Council must have an up to date privacy policy and accessibility statement.

In order to register a gov.uk domain name, a Domain Registrar must be used (ie the Council cannot do it itself). If the Council uses one of the Cabinet Office's Approved Registrars (of which there are currently 35) the Cabinet Office is offering £100 + VAT towards registering a [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) domain name. Funding support for 1,000 parish councils is available for this financial year but it is not known if this support will be available in future years. This is a sizeable subsidy towards the overall costs involved. The Council's current website host is not a domain registrar. Its current registrar (Fasthosts Internet Ltd) is not currently on the list of Approved Registrars (ie registrars who have signed up to provide specialist support for Parish Councils), although more registrars are expected to be included on the list over the coming months. At this stage however, it is likely that the Council would need to use a new registrar to qualify for the funding support.

Active Council are Approved Registrars and are currently able to provide a gov.uk domain name at a discounted price of £30.00 + VAT (ie net of the government subsidy).

Aubergine are also Approved Registrars so are also able to provide a gov.uk domain name at a discounted price.

Gov.uk email addresses for Clerk and Councillors

As mentioned above, if the Council migrates to a gov.uk domain name, it will be compulsory for the Clerk to use a gov.uk email address.

It is not mandatory for Councillors also to use gov.uk email addresses but is regarded as good practice. There are costs associated with this and, by way of example our current website host could provide these on the following basis:

Cost of setting up 6 email accounts (ie Clerk and all Councillors): £60.
Storage: Ongoing cost of £20 pa per account for 250MB or £40 pa per account for 1GB of storage per account (the current amount of storage used is 3.23GB – after considerable culling of email folders)

Councillors are requested to decide how they wish to proceed in relation to a gov.uk domain and email and what further information is needed