ICT & GDPR Compliance Activities

Avast and Cloud care backup has now been installed on parish laptops.

The Clerk has booked a free online session to explore how to make more use of the Sharepoint and Teams elements of Microsoft for Councillors.

Website Accessibility
The Clerk has been working with Mdsign who run the parish website to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (the 'accessibility regulations'). A useful summary from SLCC is attached as Appendix A. An accessibility statement has been prepared (attached as Appendix B) and published to the website, which details the work undertaken so far, and identifies a number of issues which will need addressing.

A full audit of the website (which is necessary under the regulations) is a considerable undertaking and Mdsign has estimated that this, interpreting the results and putting in place any actions identified, is likely to take 3 days. This work is additional to the general maintenance of the website, which itself has been more time consuming in this financial year due to the creation of the Wickhambrook Together page and the updates related to COVID-19. The clerk has received prospective approaches from software companies offering to undertake an audit, in the region of £500 plus VAT, but this would not include work to improve accessibility.

Recommendation:

To authorise additional time for Mdsign to complete an audit of the website and make any necessary proportionate changes to improve accessibility in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 at a cost of £735 plus VAT.

Social Media
Following a question from the clerk about the number of visits (fairly low) to the new Wickhambrook Together page, Mdsign has advised that although the page provides useful content, it is likely that much of the audience for the info being posted to it would be more likely to use Facebook and/or Twitter. Although the parish did originally have a Facebook page, this was discontinued a few years ago. Currently, the webmaster at Mdsign alerts the clerk to any key trending discussions on the community page, and does post some links at the clerks request back to the parish website (for example, progress on the Playfort). However, this can be time consuming for the webmaster (and is not included in their charges), and some of the content on the parish pages does not align with the purpose of the community pages.

It would be possible to set up a Facebook and Twitter account for the parish where the majority of posts are published automatically to them whenever a new post is added to the website. This would enable the parish to reach a wider audience than is currently the case. With the accounts being administered by the clerk, there would be some moderation.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
September 2020

Wickhambrook PC has a social media policy, attached as Appendix C. In the medium to long term, there may be a small cost implication to maintaining and moderating social media in terms of the clerk's time, which could be estimated and built into the budget for the next financial year.

Action:
Councillors are asked to decide whether to set up and maintain social media accounts for the parish (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and identify a timescale for going live with accounts.

Online Accounting Package:
The parish accounts are currently maintained on excel spreadsheets, and whilst adequate, it does present some challenges in preparation of reconciliations, quarterly and year end accounts, and preparation of final accounts for AGAR and VAT126 claims. The clerk has not previously looked at accounting packages, as they can be quite expensive, but has recently been approached by easy pc account (www.easypcaccounts.co.uk). This is a cloud based accounts package, has been developed by a former clerk and internal auditor, and is currently in use by 10 parishes (four clerks) with a further 3 parishes trialling it.

The package is web based, on a receipts and payments basis, and includes:
- A full budget package with monthly, quarterly and annual reports
- Interactive bank reconciliation
- Creation of annual returns in the format required by AGAR and
- Creates VAT reports for the special claims method for local authorities

The clerk has looked at the package with the developer and it appears intuitive and easy to use.

The package is available on a free 3 month trial and costs £60 per annum.

Recommendation:
To authorise the clerk to undertake a free 3 month trial of the software and if satisfied subscribe to the software at a cost of £60 per annum.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
September 2020

THE ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE REQUIREMENT DEADLINE FOR COUNCILS LOOMS. ARE YOU PREPARED AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?

SLCC has partnered with Aubergine to support clerks in meeting website accessibility requirements. Check if you are compliant and the steps you need to take.

ACCESSIBLE WEBSITES

The requirement for public bodies is to have a website that meets WCAG 2.1AA accessibility standards by 23rd September 2020. The requirement is not about the 'design' of the website, but all about the functionality and delivery of the information to the user.

Unless your website was built in the last 2 years and specifically had WCAG 2.1AA compliance that was part of the brief, it is unlikely it was be compliant. It was probably built using older methods that weren't compatible with these modern standards. Typically, parish and town council websites were built before WCAG compliance was required. You may have invested a lot of money 3-5 years ago, but this was before the requirement and you now face having to invest again.

Most clerks are aware of the WCAG requirement but may not have done anything about it yet due to recent events. The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) has plenty of resources for clerks. You can also access discounted offers for compliant website packages on the website www.slcc.co.uk/wcag-website-compliance-for-councils

IS YOUR WEBSITE WCAG COMPLIANT?

A complete answer can only come from someone who has both technical knowledge and the understanding of what WCAG compliance means.

Nonetheless the pragmatic approach that many have taken is to follow these simple steps:

1) Contact your existing website developer or the person who built/looks after the site and ask the explicit question: 'Do you know if our website meets WCAG 2.1AA compliance?'

2) Put your website through a scan or checking service. There are free and paid-for checking services that can do this – whilst they are automated systems and do not fully emulate the experience of a person who uses assistive technology, they do give you a good idea of how compliant your current website is.
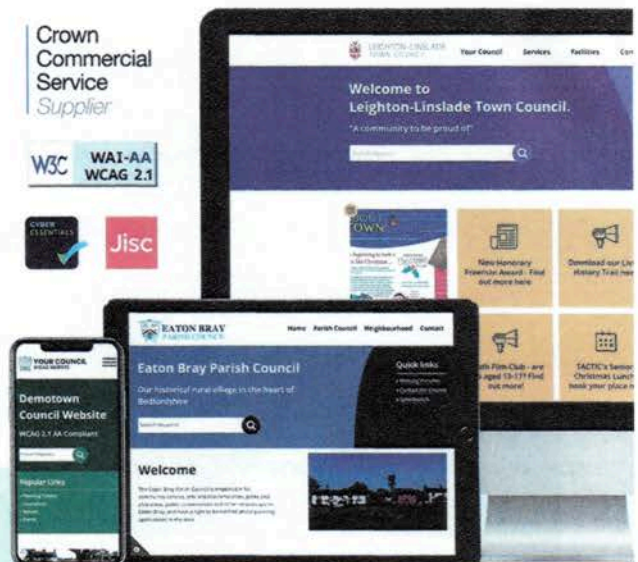
Visit www.slcc.co.uk/website-compliance or learn more on our Website Accessibility Guidelines Webinar available at www.slcc.co.uk/events

3) Take this opportunity to audit the website. Use Excel or similar to identify every page of the site and notes about the content – whether it needs updating or not. You can then work through the site in a methodical way. It's also helpful when it comes to dividing up areas of responsibility to councillors and other support staff.

FREE CHECKING SERVICES

If you are going to do it yourself, there are a handful of free services that will get you started. Here's a couple that are Chrome Browser Extensions:

- SiteImprove
- WAVE by WebAIM

Both of these are fairly easy to install and set up but do require some knowledge as to interpreting the results.

Remember when using these, to make sure you set the WCAG 2.1 AA rating as the measuring point. A free checker won't tell you whether a PDF that has been added meets compliance, it only looks at web pages themselves.

PAID CHECKING SERVICES

Examples of pay for checking services include:

- DeQue (deque.com) is a very good, paid for service. Ongoing reports, scanning and recommended fixes for the problems - but expensive; and,
- Tenon (Tenon.io) is easy to use, but the reports are complex to understand and very in-depth. This is really for someone with web development knowledge to interpret.

WHAT IF YOUR SITE ISN'T COMPLIANT?

Making an existing website WCAG 2.1AA compliant is often slower and more expensive than getting a new one that is compliant 'out of the box'. Older websites were just not built with WCAG compliance in mind. Compliant website packages are built with both council requirements, in terms of pages and functions and WCAG compliance in mind – and hence they are easy to use, maintain and are a cost-effective way to become and stay compliant.

THINGS TO AVOID

'Quick-fix plugins'

Accessibility plugins (bolt-on functionality for websites) look like a quick fix – but still require extra actions by users with accessibility issues, such as controllers for colours, fonts and the like.

A truly accessible website has no barriers to any user - it should just work and not require extra interaction to allow them to access the content.

They are merely masking underlying problems and using one suggests you have likely misunderstood the meaning behind accessibility.

Thinking it doesn't affect your council

You may have just spent money on a website not long ago - but unless you can demonstrate that the website meets the accessibility compliance, you are in breach of the Equality Act and could be open to challenges. Put simply, it's the right thing to do. A council has a responsibility, as public servants, to make sure the information it puts out is accessible to all users.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1) Audit your website and assess if it meets the WCAG requirements.

2) If your website isn't compliant, get quotes from experienced providers of accessible websites.

3) Draw up an action plan of what you can achieve by **23rd September** – make it realistic – focus solely on the regulatory requirements first (minutes, agendas, finance and AGAR etc) and leave the community-related content until last – it can always be added gradually later.

You do not need to have every file going back to the dawn of time – accessible documents from September 2018 need to be provided. Finance documents and AGAR need to have 5 years records and you need to have councillor information with current register of interests, along with current policies and procedures. You will also need to have an accessibility statement and an accessible documents statement that reflects your council's current status in terms of the content on the site.

Better to have less on the site and it be compliant rather than a website full of content that isn't compliant. That is not the remit of a public body website.

Making the information clear to understand and accessible to all is the real requirement.

THE SLCC SOLUTION

SLCC have partnered with Aubergine, an experienced web agency, to develop a WCAG 2.1AA compliant website package that provides a new website built on a modified version of the popular Wordpress platform. The package, discounted for SLCC members, includes the building, hosting, training and ongoing support. WCAG scans and reports are available to help you learn during the first year. You can find out more here: www.slcc.co.uk/website-compliance

POST-COMPLIANCE

1) Regular (e.g. quarterly) full content checks with a comprehensive checking tool

2) When new content is added, use the online checkers for a browser-based check on each page - and look to seek some support from people in your parish or town that actually use assistive technology

3) Encourage a change of mindset - encourage a change of thinking about the role of your website.

Accessibility statement for wickhambrook.org

This accessibility statement applies to Wickhambrook.org.

This website is run by Wickhambrook Parish Council in association with Mdsign Internet Services Limited. We want as many people as possible to be able to use this website and are actively working to check and meet accessibility guidelines.

Images have a text alternative, so people using a screen reader can access the information. This complies with WCAG 2.1 success criterion 1.1.1 (non-text content).

We've made the website text as simple as possible to understand.

AbilityNet has advice on making your device easier to use if you have a disability.

How accessible this website is

We know some parts of this website are not fully accessible, we are currently working on this and will update this statement as progress is made.

Feedback and contact information

If you need information on this website in a different format like accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille:

For the Wickhambrook Parish Council pages, e-mail parishclerk@wickhambrook.org.uk, or call 07508 039810

We'll consider your request and get back to you in 10 working days.

If you cannot view the map on our 'contact us' page, call or email us https://wickhambrook.org/parish-council/ for directions.

Reporting accessibility problems with this website

We're always looking to improve the accessibility of this website. If you find any problems not listed on this page or think we're not meeting accessibility requirements, please contact us using the details above,

Enforcement procedure

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (the 'accessibility regulations'). If you're not happy with how we respond to your complaint, contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS).

Technical information about this website's accessibility

Wickhambrook.org is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Compliance status

This website is partially compliant with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1](#) AA standard, due to the non-compliances and exemptions listed below.

Non-accessible content

The content listed below is non-accessible for the following reasons.

- We are currently assessing which content is non-accessible.
- We plan to improve accessibility during October 2020 to further meet accessiblity standards.

Non-compliance with the accessibility regulations

- We are currently assessing which content is non-accessible.

We plan to assess this further during October 2020.

Disproportionate burden

Some elements of our website may involve accessibility problems that would be a disproportionate burden to fix.

We are assessing our website in October 2020 to ascertain whether this is the case and will update our statement accordingly.

Elements that may be a disproportionate burden now will not necessarily be a disproportionate burden forever. If the circumstances change we will assess these elements again and make any improvements we are able.

Content that's not within the scope of the accessibility regulations

Content that falls within this scope will be assessed in October 2020.

PDFs and other documents
The accessibility regulations [do not require us to fix PDFs or other documents published before 23 September 2018](#) if they're not essential to providing our services. For example, we do not plan to fix Agendas, Minutes and other parish council documents published before this date.

Any new PDFs or Word documents we publish will meet accessibility standards.

Live video
We do not plan to add captions to live video streams because live video is [exempt from meeting the accessibility regulations](#).

Preparation of this accessibility statement

This statement was prepared on 17 September 2020. It was last reviewed on 17 September 2020.

Wickhambrook Parish Council
Social Media Policy

Policy statement

    1.1. This policy is intended to help employees including clerks, RFO's, Executive Officers, part-time, fixed-term and casual employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy), volunteers and members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

    1.2. This policy outlines the standards we require employees and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor your use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

    1.3. This policy supplements our Media Policy.

2. The scope of the policy

    2.1. All employees, volunteers and members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our council.

    2.2. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

    3.1. The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

    3.2. The clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.

    3.3. All employees, volunteers and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to The Clerk.

    3.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to The Clerk

4. Using social media sites in our name

    4.1. Only the Clerk and Webmaster are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name and on our behalf.

5. Using social media

    5.1. We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about our council and community. We also recognise the importance of our employees, volunteers and members joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

    5.2. Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the council you must:

        a) have read and understood this policy the Council's Media Policy; and

        b) employees and volunteers must have sought and gained prior written approval to do so from The Clerk.

This policy was reviewed at the May 2020 Parish Council Meeting and passed by resolution of the Wickhambrook Parish Council on 28th May 2020. Next review by May 2021.

parishclerk@wickhambrook.org.uk

Wickhambrook Parish Council

6. Rules for use of social media

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

6.1. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

6.2. Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform The Clerk in the first instance.

6.3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with The Clerk.

6.4. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

6.5. Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.

6.6. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

6.7. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.

6.8. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.

6.9. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.

6.10.   Don't discuss employees without their prior approval.

6.11.   Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

6.12.   Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

7. Monitoring use of social media websites

7.1. Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure.

7.2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us.

7.3. In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

   a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);

   b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;

   c) material which is offensive, obscene

   d) criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council, members, or our employees;

This policy was reviewed at the May 2020 Parish Council Meeting and passed by resolution of the Wickhambrook Parish Council on 28th May 2020. Next review by May 2021.

parishclerk@wickhambrook.org.uk

Wickhambrook Parish Council

    e) confidential information about the council or anyone else

    f) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council); or

    g) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

    Any such action will be addressed under Disciplinary Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

7.4. Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any

witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

7.5. If you notice any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy please report it to The Clerk in the first instance.

8. Monitoring and review of this policy

8.1. The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy bi-annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

This policy was reviewed at the May 2020 Parish Council Meeting and passed by resolution of the Wickhambrook Parish Council on 28th May 2020. Next review by May 2021.

parishclerk@wickhambrook.org.uk