



LANDFORD PARISH COUNCIL – GOV.UK DOMAIN

Report to Full Council – 12 June 2024

1. Background

- 1.1. A gov.uk domain is a council's address on the internet. It can be used for its website eg. www.councilname.gov.uk and for its email eg. clerk@councilname.gov.uk. It is only available to UK government organisations, is controlled by the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) and is a secure service.
- 1.2 There is currently no legislation that requires a town or parish council to operate from a gov.uk domain. It is not expected that such domains for small councils will become law in the near future, however, it is recommended that smaller councils move to such a domain due to the security and other benefits such domains provide.
- 1.3 The benefits of a gov.uk domain are:
 - Addition of a high level of authenticity and trust to the content and messaging;
 - Provide domain locking to prevent unauthorised transfer and loss;
 - Have National Cyber Security centre (NSCS) scanning;
 - Greater security processes for protection;
 - Better for GDPR and responding to FOI requests;
 - Provide greater trust in the domain for improved deliverability of emails;
 - Show up higher in search engine results;
 - Better legal protection as it's based in a UK jurisdiction.
- 1.3 Domains which are not gov.uk, but have org.uk or co.uk for example, require no verification or checking on the authenticity of the registrant and what websites or emails are run from it.
- 1.4 Landford Parish Council currently uses an org.uk domain for its website and its clerk email address, and gmail for its Councillor email addresses.

2. Getting a GOV.UK Domain

- 2.1. The Council must first find a registrar which is approved by the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) to register and manage gov.uk domains. There are numerous approved registrars, however, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) recommends Aubergine with whom it has set up a Parish Council Domains Helper Service.
- 2.2 The Helper Service is designed to equip councils to move to a gov.uk domain. The Service provides a series of 4 sessions, for attendance by the Clerk, that will:
 - Help them get the green light to move to a gov.uk domain from their council
 - Choose the right domain registrar for their council's individual circumstances
 - Get their new domain set up, and
 - Maintain good working practices.
- 2.3. All councils using the Helper Service will receive enhanced support from a short list of domain registrars who are experienced in working with councils and access to Cabinet Office funding of £100 +VAT to help with their move. Councils can register their interest by emailing

parish.helper@domains.gov.uk. Introductory sessions are being held throughout 2024 ensuring that councils can engage when they are ready to do so.

3. Requirements to having a gov.uk Domain

- 3.1 In October 2024, the domain standard will change from WCAG2.1AA to WCAG2.2AA. The Council's website will need to comply with the various principals and requirements of this standard. Note: Aubergine's website packages meet both current and these future compliance requirements.
- 3.2 The Clerk must have a domain based email such as clerk@yourparishcouncil.gov.uk as a minimum. An official of the council cannot operate a gmail, hotmail or other non gov.uk email address.
- 3.3 Website hosting must have an SSL (secure sockets layer) security certificate and meet current GDPR compliance. Note: SSL is a digital security feature that enables an encrypted connection between a website and a browser, providing a safe and secure way to transmit sensitive data.
- 3.4 The Council must have an up to date privacy policy and accessibility statement.

4. Costs of Changing Domain

- 4.1. Aubergine offers a website package which has been designed and built with parish & town councils in mind to meet WCAG2.1AA accessibility compliance requirements. It has lots of layouts, functions and features all designed to help clerks and council website administrators update and publish both regulatory and community-focussed content in an easy and time-saving way. For example, the website would be transparency code ready, GDPR compliant, WCAG2.1 AA and WCAG2.2 AA compliant, and enable different design options and templates.
- 4.2 Aubergine provide free training and ongoing support from sector experts. The cost for a small parish council with a precept below £100k is £499 + VAT with a 2 year fixed price guarantee. Details can be found here: <https://www.aubergine262.com/parish-town-council-websites/#page-row-5>.
- 4.3 Aubergine offers a free gov.uk domain for 2 years, after which the cost is £100 + VAT per year (values correct at time of writing).

Summary

- 4.1. There is currently no legislation that requires a parish council to operate from a gov.uk domain, and it is unlikely that such a domain will become mandatory over the next few years.
- 4.2 Support and guidance from SLCC and their preferred supplier Aubergine is available to equip councils who are thinking of moving to a gov.uk domain.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 It is recommended that Full Council:
 - Note this report.
 - Determine if it wishes to pursue a gov.uk domain at this time.
 - Approve any next steps to be taken, if any.