

Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford, Ruckley and Langley Parish Council

.gov.uk domain – briefing note

April 2024

Parish and town councils are receiving strong recommendations that we should transfer our website and emails to a domain ending in .gov.uk.

The JPAG practitioner's guide was updated this year to make their advice to switch to a .gov.uk domain stronger, as follows:

The importance of using .gov.uk domains for websites and emails

5.210. All Parish, Town and Community Councils are eligible to use, and are advised to use, a .gov.uk domain for their websites and email communications. Your community, suppliers and partners will now reasonably expect a local council to have a .gov.uk domain name. Note that Parish meetings are exempt from the requirement to have a website.

5.211. To assist with compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), it is advised that clerks provide official .gov.uk email accounts to their councillors, which must only be used for official council business.

5.212. When choosing a domain name all councils must follow the rules set out by the Cabinet Office to choose a .gov.uk domain name, for example, 'ourparishcouncil.gov.uk' with email addresses linked to that domain.

5.213. Using a .gov.uk domain for your council website and email accounts gives Parish Councils the following advantages:

5.214. Increased professionalism and trust from members of your community, partners and suppliers because your email address and website domains are a trusted government brand.

5.215. Separation of your personal life from your professional life, ensuring members of your community, partners and suppliers understand what capacity you are emailing them in - whether a Councillor or Clerk.

5.216. Increased control for the Responsible Officer over email accounts and documentation when managing new joiners, leavers, sudden absences or Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests.

5.217. Peace of mind that your .gov.uk Parish Council domain will never be sold to someone else if it is not renewed on time, which can happen with .co.uk, .org.uk and other commercial domains.

5.218. Additional security measures, as all .gov.uk domains are checked for any cyber vulnerabilities by the Cabinet Office and reported to the Responsible Owner, or your technical point of contact, so they can be fixed.

5.219. You can read more about the benefits of getting a .gov.uk domain on the GOV.UK website.

Despite this clear advice, currently only about 20% of town and parish councils are using a .gov.uk website. As a result, the Government's Central Digital and Date Office (CDDO) has launched the Parish Council Domains Helper Service to assist and encourage councils to migrate to .gov.uk.

They have identified the main reasons why Councils have not switched, including the fact that it is more expensive to own/run a .gov.uk domain and many clerks and councillors believe they don't have the capacity or knowledge required to make this move.

The Parish Council Domains Helper Service is offering guidance, a list of approved suppliers, and financial help to make this change. I think it is likely that in future years it may become compulsory

for parish councils to use a .gov.uk domain. Therefore, while we have not budgeted to make this change in 2024/25, it may be prudent to investigate this option now while there is financial aid available rather than delaying and possibly missing out on the help. This may also be a good opportunity to update our website which is looking a bit tired.

I am going to try to attend an online workshop on 8 May run by the Council's Domain Helper Service. Hopefully, I will be able to find out more and get a better idea of the costs involved and the financial help available. Even if we do not decide to go ahead with this change this financial year, it will help us to budget to make this change in future years should the Council wish to.

More information

A couple of NALC articles about the Parish Council Domains Helper Service:

[Moving your council to a .gov.uk domain couldn't be easier with the parish council domains helper service - News \(nalc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Moving over to a .gov.uk domain? A new way to contact the Parish Council Domains Helper Service - News \(nalc.gov.uk\)](#)

The CDDO has produced a short explanatory video providing more helpful details [available here.](#)