

Briefing Note

Parish Council domain (gov.uk)

2 min read

Reproduced from SLCC¹ and Cabinet Office documents

1.0 Background

1.1 Most public sector organisations must use a .gov.uk or other government domain name for their websites, emails and services. A .gov.uk domain name is like a street address, there would be lots of organisations on the same street, all with their own address. For example, HMRC, your local town council and even the Prime Minister would have addresses on .gov.uk street. They are all part of the same domain but have unique addresses.

1.2 CALC and NALC² are encouraging parish councils to switch from their current domain (for websites that end in 'org.uk) to a 'gov.uk'. This means that the web address would change, as well as councillors' email addresses.

2.0 What are the advantages?

2.1 The Joint Panel of Accountability & Governance Practitioners' Guide 2024 sets out standards for audit processes which the UK Cabinet Office endorses as part of its encouragement for councils to change to a gov.uk domain. *These notes below are extracted from the JPAG Guide and are advisory, not compulsory (their paragraph numbers for reference)*

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.

¹ SLCC Society of Local Council Clerks

² NALC National Association of Local Council

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.

3.0 How would we make the change?

3.1 Council can 'purchase' a 'gov.uk' domain for £105 for 2 years (renewable for £55 for 2 years after, currently £25 for 2 years). Our current web manager would carry out the purchase and setting up of the new domain. There would be no interruption to service. Current visitors to the 'org.uk' website would be redirected to the 'gov.uk' site. New email addresses would be created for councillors and clerk, with current addresses forwarded to the new mailboxes.

4.0 Next steps

4.1 Councillors may wish to consider purchasing the new domain name and agreeing to move over to new email addresses or to maintain current arrangements.

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Date: 27 August 2024