

Guidance

Moving your parish council to a .gov.uk domain

This guide is for parish council clerks who want to set up or move their council to a .gov.uk domain.

From: [Government Digital Service \(/government/organisations/government-digital-service/\)](/government/organisations/government-digital-service/), [Department for Science, Innovation and Technology \(/government/organisations/department-for-science-innovation-and-technology/\)](/government/organisations/department-for-science-innovation-and-technology/) and [Central Digital and Data Office \(/government/organisations/central-digital-and-data-office/\)](/government/organisations/central-digital-and-data-office/)

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Applies to England

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The .gov.uk domain was specifically created for use by central, devolved and local UK public sector organisations. Parish councils are eligible to use the .gov.uk domain name for websites and emails.

Your first step is to get council approval to use a .gov.uk domain name. If you've already done this, you can start at step 2, Check the services you

need.

1. Get council approval to buy a .gov.uk domain

Get council approval to apply for a .gov.uk domain name during one of your official meetings so that it is recorded in your minutes.

Explain the benefits of a .gov.uk domain name to your council

The benefits for parish councils include having:

- the trusted and professional .gov.uk brand that people will recognise
- increased transparency and security compared to personal email accounts
- the ability to manage email accounts by removing staff when they leave
- easy access to staff email accounts to fulfil FOI obligations
- continuous central government monitoring for potential security vulnerabilities
- better legal protection because it's based in a UK jurisdiction

All permanent staff and councillors must use individual .gov.uk email accounts rather than free personal email accounts to improve professionalism, maintain transparency and to increase security within the parish council sector.

Read more on [the benefits of using a .gov.uk domain](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/benefits-of-getting-a-govuk-domain) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/benefits-of-getting-a-govuk-domain>).

2. Check the services you need

You will need to buy a domain, web hosting, email accounts and possibly get a new website. The costs will vary depending on the services you are buying, the size of your council and which supplier you choose. For example, the more councillors you have the more email accounts you will need to buy.

When you understand the services you need, you can plan your budget. This will help your council make a smooth and cost-effective move to a .gov.uk domain.

Use the checklist below to decide what services your parish council needs.

Service	Do you need this?	What this will provide
.gov.uk domain	Yes ✓	You must have a domain to have any digital services such as a website and emails.
Email addresses	Yes ✓	<p>The parish clerk must have a role-based .gov.uk email.</p> <p>To meet your FOI and transparency obligations, you must give email addresses to each councillor and to any permanent staff.</p> <p>Free email accounts do not look professional and some providers will scan emails to personalise and target advertising.</p>
.gov.uk website	Yes ?	<p>You need this as you are legally required to publish information on a website.</p> <p>Currently the smallest councils, known as Parish Meetings, are not legally required to have a website.</p>
Renewing existing domain name	Yes	<p>Because it is an asset, you will need to continue renewing your old domain name annually. This will prevent anyone else from registering it and impersonating your organisation.</p> <p>Read more guidance on how to stop using your non-government domain name.</p>
Website hosting	Yes ?	You will need this to make your website available on the internet.
Website accessibility	Yes	<p>All public sector websites must publish an accessibility statement to meet their legal requirements.</p> <p>This can include details of what you know needs fixing. Read more guidance on how to make your website accessible and publish an accessibility statement.</p>

You can do a [basic accessibility check](#) to see if there are improvements needed to your current website.

If you buy a new .gov.uk website, you should expect it to be fully accessible.

You do not have to buy or build a fully accessible website if you can prove your council cannot afford it. This is known as a [disproportionate burden](#).

Moving email data

Optional ?

You may need this if you are moving from another domain and want to still have access to your email history.

Transfer of your old website

Discuss with your registrar ✓

You may want this if you have a current website you want to move from a different domain.

Design of a new website

Discuss with your registrar

You may need this if you want to create a new site that is suitable for the .gov.uk domain. For example, if you currently have a page on another organisation's site.

3. Understand your role as a registrant

As the clerk of the parish council you are the registrant. This role means you have control over the domain name and all related services, such as emails and the website. The supplier who registers and manages your gov.uk domain is called a registrar.

As the registrant you are accountable for:

- contacting a registrar to apply for and manage your domain name
- making sure you follow the [rules for using a .gov.uk domain name](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-your-govuk-domain-name?step-by-step-nav=5a9309a3-9a80-4faa-b24f-1797023e897f#follow-the-rules-for-using-a-govuk-domain-name) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-your-govuk-domain-name?step-by-step-nav=5a9309a3-9a80-4faa-b24f-1797023e897f#follow-the-rules-for-using-a-govuk-domain-name>)

When your parish council has agreed to move to a gov.uk domain, you can start to look for a registrar to work with and send the application for you.

Email support@domains.gov.uk if you have any questions about being a registrant.

4. Choose a registrar to buy your services

Suppliers who have agreed to the criteria to provide .gov.uk domains are called Approved Registrars. There are nearly 200 .gov.uk Approved Registrars available. A number of these suppliers have experience working with parish councils and have agreed to provide extra support to help you move to or set up a .gov.uk domain. We refer to them as Parish Council Helper Service Registrars on this page.

What to expect from Parish Council Helper Service Registrars

When you choose a Parish Council Helper Service Registrar from the list on this page you can expect:

- helpful support in non-technical language
- active ongoing support including telephone, online ticket or video call support
- the safe movement of any existing services to your new domain
- help with .gov.uk email and device set up
- minimal disruption during the set up of your new domain and services
- a technical point of contact to promptly resolve problems

Your .gov.uk Approved Registrar will manage the technical aspects of the domain for you. You will have a long-term working relationship with the registrar you use, so it's important you feel you are comfortable communicating with them.

The list of Parish Council Helper Service Registrars

Central government cannot recommend a particular Parish Council Helper Service Registrar. However, you can ask for recommendations and discuss pricing with other parish councils or on forums such as the [Community Clerks' Network Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/groups/communityclerksnetwork) (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/communityclerksnetwork>) page.

Parish Council Helper
Service Registrar

Contact details

[Active Council](#)

01677 392001

hello@activecouncil.co.uk

<u>Albany Web Design</u>	01709 551255 https://www.albany-computers.co.uk/content/contact-us
<u>Alchemy Systems (Western) Ltd</u>	01392 248498 hello@alchemysys.co.uk
<u>Aubergine</u>	01525 373020 thestudio@aubergine262.com
<u>Black Nova Designs Ltd</u>	01793 210 045 sales@blacknovadesigns.co.uk
<u>Cloud Next</u>	0333 202 1032 sales@cloudnext.uk
<u>Cloudy IT</u>	01280 814684 hello@cloudyit.co.uk
<u>CME Digital</u>	01494680118 hello@cme.digital
<u>Cuttlefish</u>	01509 46 27 27 localcouncils@cuttlefish.com
<u>Durham Associates Ltd</u>	jon@da-group.co.uk 01429 837700
<u>Easy Internet Solutions (NetNerd)</u>	0333 222 4080 sales@netnerd.com
<u>Easyspace</u>	0370 755 5088 hostmaster@easyspace.com
<u>Freethought</u>	03300882130

	sales@freethought.uk
Force 36	0345 166 7136 improved.it@force36.net
Hugo Fox	01635 888442 team@hugofox.com
JNR Computer Services	01903 718188 jmaund@jnrcomputers.co.uk
Macintosh Electronics Ltd	0161 796 5272 karl@macintoshelectronics.com
NetWise UK	0151 272 0104 info@netwiseuk.com
NYES Digital	01609 536 086 cirrus@nyes.digital
Openstrike	01722 770036 domains@openstrike.co.uk
Parish Council Website	01494 438904 webmaster@parishcouncilwebsite.net
Parish Council Websites (BWP Creative)	01922 606 556 info@parishcouncilwebsites.co.uk
Parish Online	01256 586 980 support@parish-online.co.uk
reCoded Solutions Ltd	07841 424720 support@recodedsolutions.com

Room 101	020 3405 1101 richard@room101.co.uk
Somerset Web Services	01823 353760 info@somersetwebservices.co.uk
Vision ICT	01392 669497 info@VisionICT.com
WHAMOS Ltd	councils@whamosltd.co.uk 01229 774591
X-Net	+44 (0)1202 755 302 engage@x-net.co.uk

5. What to do when you've set up your domain

Your Registrar will usually manage your domain for you but we recommend you do the following.

5.1. Check your .gov.uk website and emails are working properly before sending out any communications.

5.2. When your .gov.uk emails are set up, it's a good idea to redirect messages from your old inbox to the new .gov.uk one for a reasonable amount of time before shutting it down completely. You may also be able to set an out of office message. Your registrars will let you know the options available to you.

5.3. Make sure everyone working for the council signs and agrees to follow an IT policy. You can [download this template IT policy \(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LS-2nTHt-c6mu58ijhEBuTYtzP2IFbrfnYxLm6Clduc/edit?tab=t.0&authuser=1#heading=h.mmic9ag96i1\)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LS-2nTHt-c6mu58ijhEBuTYtzP2IFbrfnYxLm6Clduc/edit?tab=t.0&authuser=1#heading=h.mmic9ag96i1) and adapt it for your parish council.

5.4. Ask staff and councillors to complete the [free top tips for staff training \(https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/training/v4/Top+tips/Web+package/content/index.html#/\)](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/training/v4/Top+tips/Web+package/content/index.html#/) from the National Cyber Security Centre.

5.5. Make sure your website is compliant with website accessibility laws. You can follow guidance on [doing a basic accessibility check if you cannot do a detailed one](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/doing-a-basic-accessibility-check-if-you-cant-do-a-detailed-one) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/doing-a-basic-accessibility-check-if-you-cant-do-a-detailed-one>).

5.6. Publish content in HTML where possible. You can upload documents in PDF or other file formats but these may not be as accessible as HTML. However, PDFs and other formats can be formatted so that they meet accessibility laws. Read this guidance on [making non-HTML documents accessible](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/publishing-accessible-documents#making-non-html-documents-accessible) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/publishing-accessible-documents#making-non-html-documents-accessible>). Your registrar can provide help and support in this area.

5.7. Publish an accessibility statement on our website, which includes telling people how to get in touch with you if they need a more accessible document. For example, some people may need a document in large print, an audio recording or braille. You can use this [sample accessibility statement template](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sample-accessibility-statement/sample-accessibility-statement-for-a-fictional-public-sector-website) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sample-accessibility-statement/sample-accessibility-statement-for-a-fictional-public-sector-website>) and adapt it for your council.

5.8. Remember to renew your previous non-gov.uk domain every year if you have one. If it is not renewed, anyone else can buy that domain and potentially use it to impersonate your council online.

5.9. Understand your obligations by reading the [getting started with your .gov.uk domain name](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-your-govuk-domain-name?step-by-step-nav=5a9309a3-9a80-4faa-b24f-1797023e897f#follow-the-rules-for-using-a-govuk-domain-name) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-your-govuk-domain-name?step-by-step-nav=5a9309a3-9a80-4faa-b24f-1797023e897f#follow-the-rules-for-using-a-govuk-domain-name>) guidance.

6. Who to contact if you need help

In most cases, a Parish Council Helper Service Registrar will be able to answer your questions and guide you through the process of setting up and using your .gov.uk domain name.

However, you can email parish.helper@domains.gov.uk if you need any impartial advice.

You can also [sign up to a 45-minute workshop for more information on moving to a .gov.uk domain](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfLbjwJ9A_iTrGF5vwUE6MCRfXB2k3DD5w2hMc8hK8aoDLuKQ/viewform?usp=preview) (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfLbjwJ9A_iTrGF5vwUE6MCRfXB2k3DD5w2hMc8hK8aoDLuKQ/viewform?usp=preview).