

GOV.UK domain and centralised e-mail accounts.

Summary

In May 2021 the Council were advised that the JPAG guidance had been updated to include details on the importance of secure emails and GOV.UK domains. The guidance regarding emails and domains is not mandatory however is considered best practice.

When setting the budget for 2022/23 the Council included £119 for gov.uk domain costs and £432 for Microsoft 365 subscriptions.

Recommendation

To obtain a gov.uk domain via HCI Data Ltd and gov.uk email addresses for the Clerk and Councillors via Microsoft 365 in line with recommendations from the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guide March 2022¹

Background

JPAG are responsible for issuing proper practices about the governance and accounts of smaller authorities. Our internal and external auditors assess our standards of governance against the practitioners' guide produced by JPAG annually.

The Practitioners' Guide was updated in March 2021 to clarify the importance of smaller authorities using secure email systems and GOV.UK and this advice has been reiterated in March 2022.

There is guidance² regarding the use of gov.uk domain names which states that a parish council must use a geographical identifier users will recognise and the suffix parishcouncil.gov.uk or -pc.gov.uk. I would recommend using wiggintonandhopwas-pc.gov.uk as this will be shorter.

Finance and Value for money

[Prices for web services and registering domains including a .gov.uk domain \(hcidata.uk\)](#)

£119 for 2 years to register, £85 for 2 years at each renewal thereafter.

¹ The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK 5.204. All authorities except Parish meetings must now have an official website. To comply with GDPR, councils should provide official email accounts for their councillors as well as for their Clerk and other officers. 5.205. When choosing a domain name for the council's website and emails, many local council websites are appropriately making use of the official GOV.UK domain (for example, ourparishcouncil.gov.uk), with email addresses being linked to that domain. 5.206. Using a GOV.UK domain for your council website and email accounts demonstrates the council's official local government status. Members of the public are increasingly cyber security aware, so a GOV.UK domain can also help to build trust, credibility 56 and visibly demonstrates authenticity. Many people will now reasonably expect a local council to have a GOV.UK domain name. 5.207. For the purposes of user management, councils should ensure that the Proper Officer can add and remove member and staff email accounts. Commercial 'dashboard' email and web systems offer centralised searching of all data contained within the system for effective compliance with GDPR Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests.

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-your-govuk-domain-name?step-by-step-nav=5a9309a3-9a80-4faa-b24f-1797023e897f>

[Register a .gov.uk domain name for town councils, parish councils and community councils - easy to use gov.uk domain registration \(besthost.uk\)](#) – need to have website hosting package to do this and cost is £150 for first 2 years and £98 for the subsequent 2-year renewal periods.

[Register a .gov.uk domain | Freethought](#) £120 every two years.

HCI data Ltd represents the best value for money and is a known entity as Clerk has used this supplier at a previous smaller Council. Clerk has found company knowledgeable, with a good understanding of Local Councils, they have been easy to communicate with via email and telephone when required.

HCI data no longer take on new clients for email or web hosting as they are not competitive on price however they support third parties for web hosting and e-mail and advise many clients use Microsoft 365 for e-mail. Our website is currently hosted via LDC's platform free of charge.

Microsoft 365 updated their pricing in April 2022 and the costs are now:

£9.40 per user / per month for Business Standard (1 user x 12 months = £112.80)

£4.50 per user / per month for Business Basic (7 users x 12 months = £378)

Total fee for 12 months £490.80

The business basic licence will only provide online and mobile applications, this may mean that information can not be accessed at the meeting unless wi-fi passwords are obtained from Thomas Barnes and St Leonard's Schools.

If wi-fi is not available it may be worth considering a projector so that documents can be displayed via the Clerk's laptop. This would also be useful so the public can also view documents at meetings. A projector could be obtained for around £50 or the school may have a projector we are able to use, the schools are likely to have a projector screen available in the main halls.

Risk Management Issues

A centralised email system will help the Council to mitigate the risk of potential data security breaches and will help the Council to fully comply with the requirements of the data protection regulations and Freedom of Information requests.

This report was prepared by the Clerk