



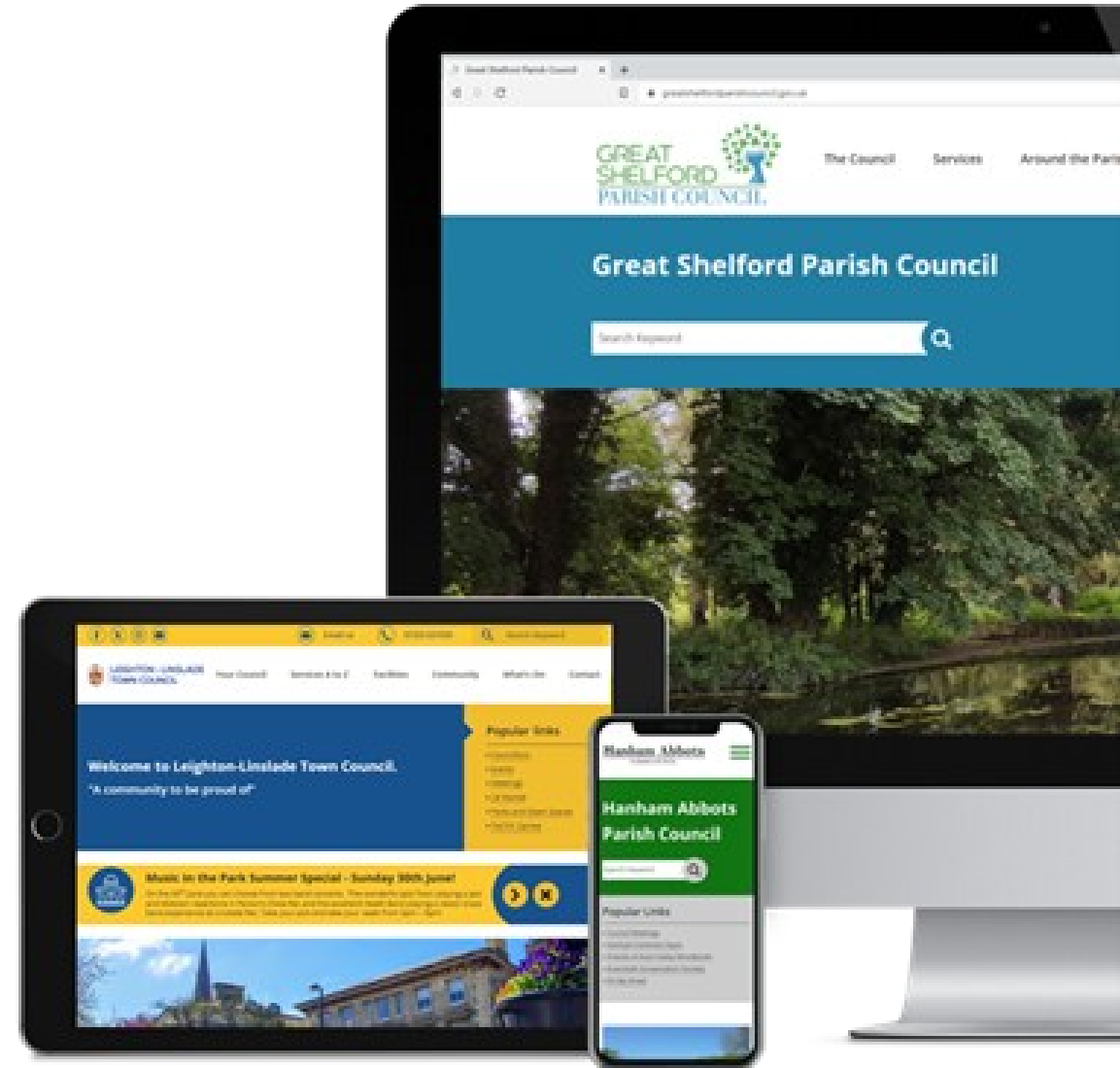
Improving Community Engagement & getting the best from your council's website

It's Your Best Communication Tool!

For parish & town clerks and those who administer websites for councils.

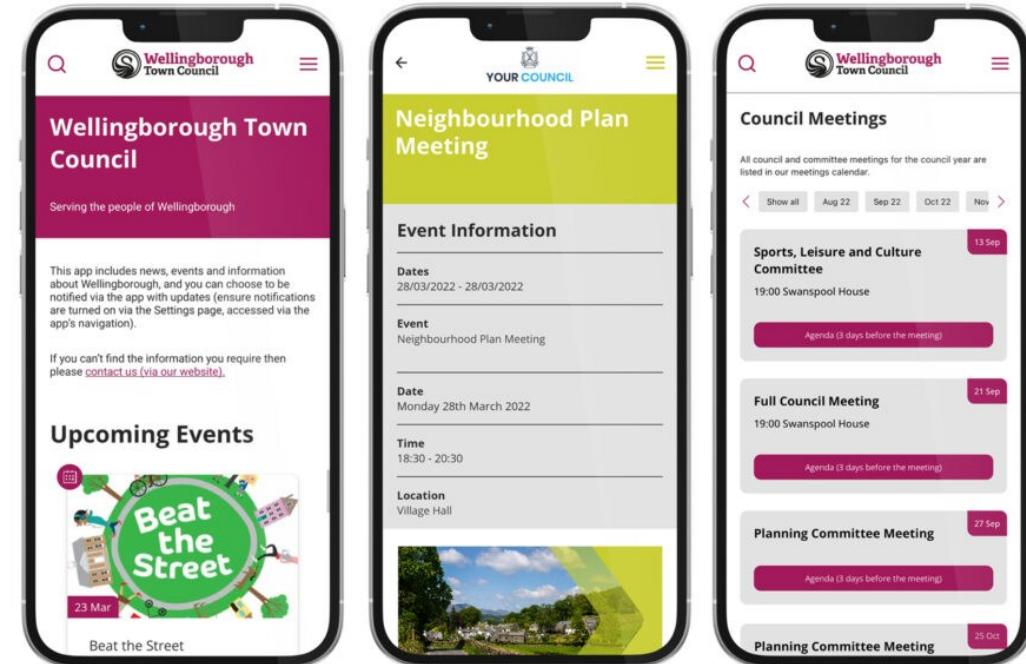


Your website is your best communication tool with the widest reach!



Must vs. Should

- What **services** the council provides
- The **regulatory** stuff
- Where and how to get **help for other services**
- Informing about **local initiatives**
- Key **projects or goals** of the council
- **Consultations** and **views** from the community
- **Community stuff** - News, events, local groups & organisations





Signposting!

The council isn't responsible for everything...

But it is responsible to signpost to who is.

The screenshot shows the website header with the 'Aubergine' logo, contact information (Email us, 01908 566726), and a search bar. The main navigation includes Home, The Council, Services, Community, What's On, and Contact. Below the navigation is a blue banner for 'Stony Stratford Town Council' with a 'Quick Links' menu containing: News, Events Calendar, Meetings Calendar, Report It (MK City Council), Planning (MK City Council), and Flood Resilience. A large image of a street with Union Jack bunting is below the banner. A grid of nine blue service tiles is shown below the image, with red arrows pointing from them to the text on the left:

- Next Council Meeting
- What's On
- Latest News
- Milton Keynes Council
- Report It (e.g. Waste, Lighting, Potholes)
- Landscaping
- Rubbish Collection
- Town Planning
- Christmas Lights

Helpful signposting

- ✓ **Draw up a list of the 6 most common subjects you're contacted about – this may change seasonally**
- ✓ **Check email & phone calls**
- ✓ **Change your homepage to address those things (buttons to pages or links to principal authority websites)**
- ✓ **Better-serve your parishioners and local residents**

Beyond Compliance: Enhancing Community Engagement

Creating a Two-Way Communication Channel:

- ✓ Online surveys and polls to gather feedback
- ✓ Make sure your "Contact Us" forms are easy to use and **work on mobile**
- ✓ Email subscription options for newsletters and updates – etc. Mailchimp/SendinBlue
- ✓ Using social media to **bring in website visitors** for a fuller experience

Go where your audience is.

But here comes the bad news....

**The community
does not hang out
on your council's
website**

BUT...



A photograph of a group of people dancing at a party. There are colorful balloons (purple, green, yellow, white) in the background. The scene is lively and social.

They do hang out on Facebook

So go there to post with a link **TO your website**



Your Parish Council

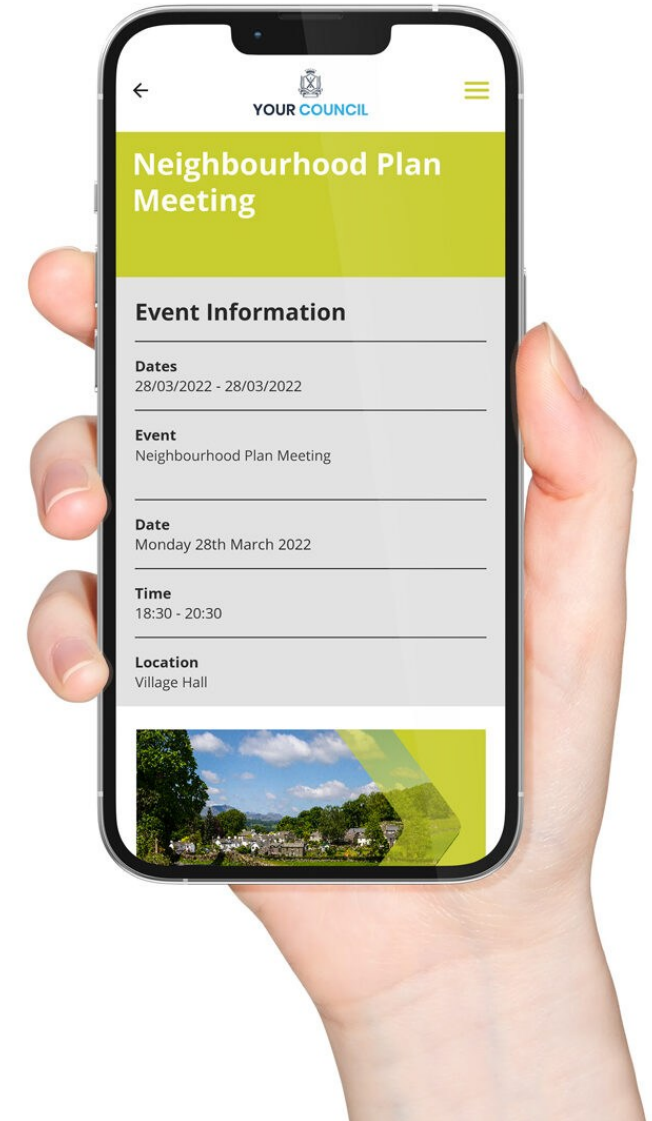


The parish council are considering updating the Neighbourhood Plan- that includes playgrounds, bus stops and more dog bins. More details on the website:

www.yourparishcounciladdress.gov.uk/news/NP




- Write the full article on your website
- It's the 'single point of truth'
- Share a **headline** and **link** to that page on **your website** from Facebook
- Make your Facebook page one-way (**no comments**)



Forms

- ✓ **Don't use MS Word or PDF files – they can't be used!**
- ✓ **Creates barriers**
- ✓ **Use web forms – can be filled in online – captures data better**
- ✓ **Mobile friendly**
- ✓ **80%+ of all users.**

Memorial Plaque Application Form

[Home](#) > Memorial Plaque Application Form

Mark testing form

Fields marked with an * are required

Applicant's Full Name *

Address

Phone

Email

Deceased's Full Name *

Last registered address of deceased: *

Beyond Compliance: Enhancing Community Engagement

Builds Transparency and Trust:

- ✓ Regular **blog posts** or **updates** from council members (within publishing guidelines)
- ✓ Consider live streaming of meetings or video updates on You Tube and embed on website (along with a textual transcript where required)

Engagement Strategies:

- ✓ Highlight **community initiatives**
- ✓ **Share council success stories** and accomplishments
- ✓ Promote **volunteer opportunities**

It's all about the users – the community!

The Importance of Clear Navigation:

- ✓ **Easy-to-find sections** - split between regulatory must-haves and the wider should-haves
- ✓ Use **mega-navs** to make navigation to different sections clearer
- ✓ “**Signposting**” – what's your area of responsibility, where to go for principal authority services
- ✓ Use the **homepage** to address the **main communication points** the council receives

Responsive Design:

- ✓ Ensure the website is **mobile-friendly** and **accessible** to all devices
- ✓ **Test** across **browsers** and devices regularly
- ✓ **Test** the **forms** regularly (on mobile, too!)



Email us



01908 566726



Search Keyword

Ease of navigation

Home

The Council

Services

Community

What's On

Contact

Your Council >

[About the Town Council](#)

[Council Staff](#)

[Become A Councillor](#)

[Grants](#)

[GDPR](#)

[Climate Emergency](#)

[Flood Resilience](#)

Your Councillors

[MK City Council Ward Councillors](#)

[Finance](#)

[Policies & Procedures](#)

[Planning](#)

[5-7 Church Street Redevelopment](#)

[Public Art](#)

Town Council Meetings >

[Meetings Calendar](#)

[About Our Meetings](#)

[Events Working Group](#)

Committees

[Minutes & Agendas](#)



Building a Community Hub: Features to Add

- **Event Calendar:**

- Showcase **upcoming events** like council meetings, community events and groups, and local events
- Consider allowing residents to submit events for inclusion (with your moderation)

- **Interactive Maps:**

- Provide information on **local landmarks, parks, and council facilities**
- Highlight community services and amenities – who looks after which park, bench, toilet, bus stop...

- **A-Z of services**

- clearly **signpost your council's services** and the principal authority responsibilities.

Building a Community Hub: Features to Add

- **Social Media & website crossover:**
 - Link website TO social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
 - Use social media to attract interest – **short headline with link to the website** for the full article
 - Consider making the **Facebook page outward messaging** only
 - **Manages the engagement** level to avoid keyboard warriors and out-of-control social media
 - Don't have embedded social channels on the website – it's a parachute to leave your website!
 - Underpin with a **social media policy** so that everyone knows the rules!

Ongoing Improvement & Feedback Loop

- **Regular Updates & Refreshes:**
 - Keep content up-to-date, especially notices, documents, and news
 - Regularly review the homepage for signposts and relevance – have enquiry types changed? Are there new things to point people to?
- **Gathering Community Feedback:**
 - Monitor website analytics to understand what works and what doesn't
 - Actively seek resident feedback through surveys and forms
 - Continuously improve based on community input – don't guess – use data and feedback to better understand what your users need from the website.

Ongoing Improvement & Feedback Loop

- **Training & Support for Council Members:**
 - Ensure council members are familiar with best practice publishing and communication techniques
 - Provide training on using the site & social media for public interaction
 - Consult with parish & town council communication experts, such as Breakthrough Communications.

Create Rules

- **Rules are good** – it means you are creating a good process legacy
- Create a social media policy that sets out the councils aims of the communication channel
- Make your social channels **OUTBOUND ONLY**
- **DO NOT** enter into discussion on the channels
- Make sure users cannot post on the pages
- Ensure all team members know the rules

Ask for help

It can be daunting to start so **seek some guidance and ask Aubergine** to set you off on the right foot!

- Compliant website packages from £499+VAT: www.aubergine262.com/wcag
- Tutorials & helpful guides: www.aubergine262.com/category/web-accessibility
- WAVE by Webaim accessibility page checker: <https://wave.webaim.org/extension/>
- SLCC & NALC/ALCs – see support from your local groups
- NALC Website Accessibility & Publishing Guidebook:
<https://www.aubergine262.com/nalc-guide-to-website-accessibility-and-publishing/>
- PDF accessibility checker: <https://checkers.eiii.eu/en/pdfcheck/>
- Contact me: mark.tomkins@aubergine262.com
- Council Communications expert – Dan Purchase at Breakthrough Communications