

Introducing the Parish Council Domains Helper Service

Welcome

The Parish Council Domains Helper Service has been set up by central government to help and support parish councils to move successfully to a .gov.uk domain.

The Domains Helper Service is open to any parish council that:

- Wants to move to a .gov.uk domain

OR

- Already has a .gov.uk domain and wants to start using other associated services such as email or a website.

What is a domain?

A domain name is like a street address on the internet. A .gov.uk domain helps people find organisations that are part of wider government. So, a parish council and the prime minister would be on the .gov.uk street, but have unique addresses. All services - website and email accounts - belong to that .gov.uk domain.

What are the benefits of a .gov.uk domain?

Security

Just like other government organisations, parish councils are at risk of cyber attack.

All .gov.uk domains are actively monitored by central government and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) for vulnerabilities and cyber threat activities. In addition, all of the .gov.uk Approved Registrars are Cyber Essentials certified meaning they are able to help safeguard your council from a whole range of the most common cyber attacks.

Be assured, this is all about protecting your council's business online.

Legitimacy and status

It should be easy for anyone to identify government organisations on the internet. A council's community should not have to guess whether the site they are on, or the email in their inbox, is genuine. Use of a [.gov.uk](#) domain means that councils are instantly recognisable as an official, authentic government organisation and their communications can be trusted.

Accountability and governance

We know all councils strive towards good practice. Using a .gov.uk domain is a sign of professionalism, accountability and governance and is now recommended in the [2024 JPAG Practitioners' Guide](#) (section 5.210).

What about .gov.uk council-owned email addresses?

Separation of professional and personal email communications

By using a [.gov.uk](#) email, a councillor or clerk's professional life is kept entirely separate from their personal life. The community will understand clearly in what capacity you are contacting them. Individual privacy will not be infringed upon should a Data Subject Access or Freedom of Information request be received.

Control and management

The updated [2024 JPAG Practitioners' Guide](#) recommends the use of council-owned email addresses and stresses the importance of .gov.uk domains. With .gov.uk emails, councils will have administrative control of email accounts for easy management of change (new joiners, leavers, sudden absences).

How you can successfully move to a .gov.uk domain

We've designed the Helper Service to support you at every step. Here's how:

- **Workshops, information and guidance** - These will support you through the process of moving to a .gov.uk domain from start to finish. You will understand the benefits of a .gov.uk domain, the services your council might need and the budget you will need to buy them. We'll even help you to have the conversations needed for decision making.
- **Shortlist of .gov.uk Approved Registrars** - We provide a shortlist of 23 .gov.uk Approved Registrars who will handle all the technical aspects of moving to a .gov.uk domain on your behalf. They all have experience working with parish councils and have committed to offering an enhanced level of support.
- **Best practice and success** - We will help you to understand and maintain best practice, enjoy the benefits and celebrate the success of your move to a .gov.uk domain.

Help with costs

For FY 2024/25 only, up to 1000 eligible parish councils are entitled to a discount of £100 + VAT off their initial purchase costs of a .gov.uk domain or .gov.uk emails and websites. This one-off discount is only available via the 23 .gov.uk Approved Registrars who appear on the service's shortlist. We'll tell you more about these funds and the shortlist when you start the process.

Here's what to do next

If you haven't already done so, please complete the [Introductory Session form](#) and we'll be in touch. This introductory session will give you an overview of what's involved in moving to a new .gov.uk domain, guidance on services and costs, and help with getting your council to make the decision to move. There is no obligation to move to a .gov.uk domain by attending this session.