

# INVESTIGATION OF LEWKNOR PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE COMPLIANCE

BY

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AT THE REQUEST OF THE COUNCIL ON 13 MAY 2024

Updated on 8 July 2024

**Introduction** A the Lewknor Parish Council (LPC) meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 I was asked to discuss the following three topics with Vision ICT who currently host the LPC Website:

1. The compliance of the council website with respect to the use of a gov.uk domain name
2. The interpretation of the gov.uk guidelines related to the inclusion of an SSL (Secure Socket Layer) Certificate on our website
3. The value for money represented by the price we currently pay for the Hosting of the website

This report details the conversation I had with Daniel Hillier managing director of Vision ICT on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024

The results of that conversation with respect to topics one and two and my recommendation with respect to topic three.

**Conversation** The conversation with Mr Hillier went pretty much down the same pathways that our Clerk had in the conversation prior to our meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> May. Hillier was adamant that with respect to the compatibility for the current standard WCAG2.1 AA there is a compliance notice included on the site. However, he believes that there is little or nothing in the updated WCA2.2AA that would change the current compliance statement. The one problem, as documented by our Clerk is that Vision ICT produced and loaded the original website in 2019 and the parish council has added content since then which may or may not comply with either WCAG2.1 AA or WCAG2.2 AA. There is a need for the council to either test this or get a third party to test it for us. It has been generally accepted that compliance with WCAG2.2 AA by October 2024 is a requirement for all “.gov.uk “websites.

Vision ICT are still of the opinion that SSL is only required where sensitive data, such as financial transactions on shopping sites, takes place. However, Vision-ICT are now providing SSL certificates for all new websites. The cost is built into the initial cost and ongoing renewals for new websites. Existing websites are only updated with SSL on request.

1. **Compliance** I recommend we ask Vision-ICT to undertake the “MoT / WCAG2.2 AA” review at £145 as a one off and that the Council make a note to review non recurring content to maintain compliance. The reviews should be minuted as evidence. It should only be necessary to repeat the process if WCAG is changed
2. **Secure Socket Layer (SSL)** I recommend that we request SSL be added to our website given the ambiguity of the regulations relating to the use of “.gov” domains. Daniel Hillier agreed to do this on renewal for an additional £25 making the Annual rehosting and support charge £200
3. **Value for Money** I recommend that the existing contract represents good value for money when compared with other offers available in the open market. There are now five principal companies offering specific local government websites. They are Vision-ICT, Parish on Line, Parish Council Websites, Aubergine and 2Commune (now part of Cuttlefish Multimedia). I have been unable to determine whether the 2Commune offer is still available as the Cuttlefish

website has very little information. With respect to the other companies Parish Council Websites minimum cost is £569 per year for a basic “standard” website and £749 per year for a choice of design website. Aubergine charge a standard annual hosting fee of £499 per year with an additional £299 per year for a WCAG annual review. Parish on Line annual hosting charge is based on the number of residents on the electoral roll. In the case of Lewknor with 660 residents it would be £500 per year. Interestingly Scribe, an organisation close to SLCC, carried out a review of three of these companies in 2023 updated in 2024. The Scribe review looked at Aubergine, Parish on Line and Vision-ICT. All three were considered to be of equal value in terms of provision but found that Aubergine was the best buy. A result I do not agree with.

**Conclusion** I have attached a number of documents with this report and I request you please read them in conjunction with the report. They are the evidence of costs for Aubergine and Parish on Line and the review carried out by Scribe. Also attached is a spreadsheet detailing the cost of the Vision-ICT contract due in August 2024 as well as the ongoing budget figures that need to be used.I