

REPORT TO PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL

3rd December 2019

AGENDA ITEM 9.2 PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

1 Background

- 1.1 For some time it has been clear that the Council's website is not as good as might be desirable. It is somewhat awkward to update and work with and for users to access relevant information, and it also does not allow the kinds of function that is increasingly desirable and increasingly easy to provide, thereby extending its use to the wider local community.
- 1.2 In addition however, as previously reported, the Website Accessibility Regulations require all existing parish council websites to incorporate means by which persons with visual or other disabilities might be able to access the information provided. The Council's current website certainly does not comply with these regulations and must do so by September 2020.
- 1.3 Also as previously noted, the Council's current website provider seems now to be inactive and does not respond to communications about the functioning of the site, and in fact does not invoice the council for the annual maintenance fee of £100 that used to be charged.
- 1.4 For all these reasons it is appropriate for your council to seek to improve its provision, and the only sensible way is to replace the site completely.
- 1.5 Apart from responding to the above issues, a new site would bring the following opportunities:
 - To improve and 'modernise' the Council's image in the local community;
 - To improve the provision of information about the parish, its activities and the parish council itself to the wider Pickmere community;
 - To involve the Pickmere community more fully in parish issues and in parish council decision-making.
- 1.6 A new site could (and should) be constructed by the use of a 'content management system' (CMS) – the most well-known such system probably being WordPress – whereby once built it would be perfectly possible for the council itself to modify the site, add, remove or edit pages, introduce new functionality etc. The new site would comply with the Website Accessibility Regulations, and if built with a good CMS would allow enhancement of this aspect of the site without the need for fundamental revision.
- 1.7 There are many software providers who could write such a system for the Council, and of them a significant number have a track record in providing sites for parish councils. In fact for a suitable software developer the job is relatively simple as most parish council

sites share a broadly similar structure. Some providers are or employ parish or district councillors themselves.

2. Report

- 2.1 As agreed at your previous meeting, a small working group comprising Cllrs Bold and Flannery and your Clerk has discussed initial thoughts as to how to proceed. Your Clerk has also started to contact several providers, based largely on recommendations from other parish council clerks, to explore prices etc. It would appear that a new site, in WordPress or similar, for a council the size of Pickmere, might cost in the region of £600-£900 for the initial provision, with an annual maintenance cost for the various elements of £100-£300. As well as the site itself there are questions of whether we retain our existing domain (pickmereparishcouncil.com), or move to a new domain (which could for instance be a .gov domain – perhaps more appropriate for a parish council), and this will impact, though not excessively, on the potential costs (our existing domain and the email addresses we use cost in the order of £175 per annum)
- 2.2 Subject to your agreement, therefore, it is the intention to seek more detailed cost quotations from a series of potential providers, with the factors described above in Background also taken into account. These would initially be sieved by the working group, and then a recommendation brought back to Council in due course. Once a provider has been chosen, the actual detailed form of a new website would then be the subject of discussion and your Council's agreement.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That the report be noted and that the working group be authorised to proceed as described.

Jack Steel
Clerk to Parish Council