

Char Valley Parish Council

Website Options

Report by the Clerk– July 2015

1. Purpose of Report

The Council at its May meeting agreed that in light of the additional requirements to publish information brought about by the national code of transparency it would be timely for the Clerk to review the means of website provision for the Parish and explore whether there are more competitive options available. This report contains an outline of the current provision and cost, an overview of potential providers together with a recommended option for consideration by the Council.

2. Current Provision

The Parish's current website is provided by Logomotion (Tim Heap). They have maintained the website since around 2005. In addition to the website itself, there is also the "hosting" of the site on a remote server and the domain name "Charvalley.pc.co.uk" for these items the Council pays a small charge to a third party. The current cost of the service provided by Logomotion is £750 per year (a payment for the year 2014-2015 is currently due). This cost covers the maintenance, regular updating of the website for agendas, minutes, planning applications and updating by Logomotion of standing information, such as councillors, representatives and contact details when requested by the Clerk.

The current provider agrees that it would now be timely to redesign and "modernise" the site and add the extra pages required for code of transparency information. The revised site would also then adopt a content management system approach and updating work would transfer from Logomotion to the clerk. Tim Heap has previously advised that he would do this for a one-off fee (he has not quoted a figure for this). The annual maintenance fees would continue to be payable.

The options for website provision – some considerations

There are a number of providers in the market. These range from large companies who see parish councils as a good market for a fairly standard approach to freelance web designers, of whom there are very many. A larger company may offer some benefits in terms of scale while an individual web designer may arguably be more likely to build a relationship with a client. Ideally a provider should either be familiar with the business of parish councils or have other similar clients.

Some providers offer an "all included" service, as is the case at present, where the provider does all of the updates from information emailed to him. Increasingly though, with improvements to content management software, providers offer websites where the Clerk, with no formal training can create the website themselves from basic templates and then routinely uploads the information directly onto the website. This option involves more work for the clerk and

therefore should have a lower direct cost than the “all included” option. There is also the option for the Clerk to develop a site themselves using an open source content management system, such as Wordpress.

4. Potential Providers

A large number of council websites have been examined to identify and assess potential options. Apart from the current provider these include Vision ICT (Bridport TC and DAPTC), Leaping Hare (Bradpole Council), Parishcouncil.net (Shillingstone), ICL webdesign (Wool), Wix.com (Bradford Peverell) and Hugo Fox (Cheselbourne, Milborne St Andrew and Stinsford). Most charge fees, although the detail of these could not always be readily obtained. Some are free. Of these Hugo Fox has emerged as the clear favourite. They are a firm of website providers with a national reach, based in Hampshire.

Their business model includes providing community sites for non-profit making bodies as part of their ethos and as a means of advertising themselves to the wider commercial community. The community sites carry Hugo Fox branding in a discrete form, but no advertising. Included in their community portfolio are a number of parish councils.

Technically the sites are on a portal provided by Hugo Fox use a template format and pages can be created, edited and managed without specialist IT skills. The websites are straight-forward but attractive when viewed either on PC, tablet or phone. A copy of Hugo Fox’s community brochure is linked here http://www.hugofox.com/uploads/guides/community_brochure.pdf. I have sought opinions on Hugo Fox from three councils in Dorset who use it – [Milborne St Andrew](#), [Cheselborne](#) and [Stinsford](#) (links attached). All three clerks gave similar and very positive feedback about the helpfulness of Hugo Fox’s staff, the simplicity of using the tools and general satisfaction with the product.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The Council has received an excellent and very responsive service from Tim Heap and Logomotion over the past few years. However web technology has moved on in this time and the council’s site needs updating to make it more modern, usable on phone and tablets and capable of being maintained by the clerk or councillors.

The opportunity presents itself for the council to have a new site that will meet these needs and improve the quality of our web presence, at no cost, with the current expectation (but no guarantee) that it will continue to be free of charge.

Therefore it is recommended that the Clerk is authorised to terminate, in an amicable fashion, our current web service provision from Logomotion and set-up a site with Hugo Fox. The target being to have the new site live by the end of August 2015.

The appendix attached gives an initial indication of how the new website may be structured and subject to agreement of the recommendation the Clerk will consult councillors on content and how much of the current website content should be transferred to the new site, or should be archived.

Initial site map for new CVPC website

Home Page	Councillors	Contacts	Meetings	Planning	Gallery	Map	Policies	Finance
Banner photos, Welcome, what is CVPC	Names, email, profile, responsibilities tel no. photo	Local orgs, etc.	Dates 2015	Planning apps 2015	Local photos	Map	Code of conduct	Final Accounts
Latest News			Agendas	Link to WDDC			Governance statement	Current Budget
Contact details (clerk)			Reports				Standing orders	Payments >£100
			Minutes				Financial Regs	Audit report
							Register of interests	Asset details
							Complaints procedure	

