Report No:	2023/109
Agenda Item No:	109 - 2023
Committee:	Full Council
Date:	4th September 2023
Title:	Web Service Provision
By:	Sam Adeniji – Parish Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Purpose of Report:	Web Service Provision

Recommendations:
Full Council is recommended:
1. To decide on a response to the decision of the current web services provider Hugofox decision to withdraw its free plan.

1. Information

1.1   The parish council currently uses the free plan of the HugoFox web building and web hosting services.

1.2   HugoFox has announced its intention to transition all existing customers on its free plan to a paid subscription model, therefore all customers on its free plan must select a paid package before the 4th of October to continue using its service.

1.3   HugoFox offers a choice of three paid packages namely a Bronze package at £9.99, a Silver package at £19.99 and a Gold package at £29.99. The bronze package at £9.99 replaces the current free plan.

2. Alternatives

2.1   In considering alternatives, the chosen website option must fully comply with the requirements of the transparency code for smaller authorities. This code requires that smaller councils must publish on a website which is publicly accessible the following:

(i) all items of expenditure above £100;
(ii) end of year accounts,
(iii) annual governance statement,
(iv) internal audit report,
(v) list of councillors or members,
(vi) the details of public land and building assets,
(vii) Minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings.

2.2   In addition, the law sets a clear accessibility threshold for public sector bodies; their website must align with WCAG 2.1 Level AA.

2.3   The chosen alternative must be capable of being managed regardless of whether specific Councillors or groups of Councillors are still on the Council. The website must be able to exist and be managed without dependency on individual Councillors.

2.4   Saving money with a cheaper DIY solution (designed and maintained by Councillors) e.g. Vix can lead to unforeseen expenses in maintenance or necessary upgrades in the future especially if those Councillors are no longer a member of the Council.

2.5   Councillors can consider a number of options including:

Option 1: A DIY solution using Vix which is designed and maintained by the Clerk and Councillors.

Option 2: A website provided and managed by a specialist local government provider. These include:
- Netwise UK (https://parishcouncilwebsites.org.uk/)
- Vision ICT (https://visionict.com/)
- Madisons solution (https://www.madisonsolutions.co.uk/)

A website using this option starts from £399 plus a setup fee of approx. £599

Option 3: Migrate to a Hugofox's bronze package.

3. Financial Appraisal

3.1   The Council has so far underspent its budget for this financial year and therefore has scope for a managed website should it decide accordingly. In addition, regardless of the option chosen a sum of up to £240.00 must be included in future budgets for website maintenance and support.