

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Community Committee
Meeting date	19 November 2025
Report author	Lizzie Martin
Agenda item	8

Website Proposal

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council's website (www.abingdon.gov.uk), assess its current level of compliance, and outline the reasons a full development of a new website is required
- 1.2 Approve development of a new website

2. Summary

- 2.1 As a public sector body, Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council is required to comply with the Public Sector Accessibility Regulations and the Equality Act by ensuring its website is accessible and supported by an up-to-date accessibility statement. Our current statement and publishing processes, do not comply and are out of date, they need to be refreshed to meet modern standards and evidence from accessibility testing needs to be recorded.

Priority improvements include addressing technical and accessibility issues such as keyboard navigation, headings, alt text, captions, accessible PDFs and finding information on the website.
- 2.2 The communications review, presented in September 2025 (Appendix 1) shows evidence that the only pages visited by members of the public are events, road works and the Museum, therefore removing information that is not relevant will ensure a more efficient usable site. The museum and history content would benefit from being developed into their own separate site, that is linked to the town councils' main site, for SEO improvements and collections management, but most importantly governance clarity and clear responsibilities for content. The Museum Manager supports this.
- 2.3 It will be more expensive and take longer to declutter and restore the current website, than build a new one. Please see section 5 for a full explanation.

3. **Action required**

- 3.1 Council to approve the recommendation to go out to tender for a development of a new website including updated accessibility regulations and a standalone site for the Museum and History content.

This will require a proposer, seconder and vote.

4. **Link to strategic plan and objectives**

- 4.1 KO2 - To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.

KO3 - To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.

KO4 - To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.

5. **Key information and options**

- 5.1 The Council's website MUST comply with the below areas of legislation

i. **Legal & standards context**

Public Sector Accessibility Regulations (2018)	Regulations require public sector websites and apps to meet WCAG (currently the expectation is WCAG 2.1/2.2 Level AA) and to publish an accessibility statement. Failure can prompt investigations and complaints. (GOV.UK)
Equality Act 2010	As a public body the Town Council must make reasonable adjustments to avoid disadvantaging disabled people; web accessibility is the practical way to meet this. (GOV.UK)
SLCC guidance	SLCC emphasises WCAG AA compliance, including making accessibility part of commissioning/tender briefs and testing. (SLCC has repeatedly flagged councils commissioning sites without proper WCAG requirements.) (slcc.co.uk)
Transparency Code / publication duties	Local authorities must publish key governance and financial documents online in accessible formats (Transparency Code for larger and smaller authorities). Ensure documents are findable and accessible. (GOV.UK Assets) Ensure the Transparency Code requirements are met publish items of expenditure, end-of-year accounts, AGAR or internal audit reports, councillor responsibilities, asset register, minutes & agendas — and that these are accessible (not just PDFs that are images). (GOV.UK Assets)

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	Make these items findable from a single “Transparency / Finance” landing page and ensure machine-readable formats where possible (CSV / accessible HTML). <i>Acceptance:</i> finance and transparency pages have open/downloadable CSV or well-structured HTML tables.
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ii. **Accessibility**

Statement	Site contains an accessibility statement and publishes meeting agendas/minutes and museum contact details. That demonstrates awareness and some compliance effort. Accessibility statement needs to show conformance level, testing evidence and dates (when last tested, by whom, and a remediation plan). There is an accessibility statement but it is not sufficient. Accessibility statement (short — to paste into site and expand): “This website is run by Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council. We aim to meet WCAG 2.1 / 2.2 Level AA. This site was last tested on [DD Month YYYY] using a combination of automated tools and manual accessibility testing including screen reader and keyboard-only checks. If you have difficulty accessing any part of this site, please email enquiries@abingdon.gov.uk or call 01235 522642 for help, or request content in an alternative format (large print, braille, audio). We respond to accessibility requests within 5 working days. You can also raise a complaint to the Council or, if unresolved, to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. A remediation roadmap and details of pages not fully compliant are available at /accessibility-issues.” <i>(Add a link to a public remediation roadmap, date of last full audit, and an explicit statement on third-party content.)</i> GOV.UK)
Documents & PDFs	All PDFs should include selectable text and tags
Multimedia	Videos should have captions and audio content have transcripts
WCAG AA (web content accessibility guidance)	SLCC warns councils to include WCAG AA (slcc.co.uk)

5.2 Museum and History – Combine as stand-alone site

Combining the museum and local history content into a single *standalone* site (A separate domain name abingdonmuseum.com was paid for 2025/2026) has multiple benefits:

Audience focus & story telling	Museum visitors and history researchers are different user journeys from people looking for council services. A dedicated site lets you design an experience focused on collections, exhibits, events, education and research services.
Collections management	Museums frequently need collection object records, searchable catalogues, image galleries with high-resolution zoom, downloadable resources for schools, and structured metadata (for collections databases or APIs). A standalone site supports that better than a general council CMS.
SEO improvement	Focused content, taxonomy and keyword strategy improves discoverability for visitors researching history or planning a museum visit. A single combined museum/history site concentrates link equity and reduces navigation friction.
Digital preservation	Museums can adopt sector best practice for digital preservation and collections access (separate backup/ingest pipelines).
Governance clarity	Clearer responsibilities for content owners (museum team vs. council services) and distinct analytics to see visitor patterns and fundraising conversion.

5.3 SEO and Data Capture Improvements

Our website has 23,557 pages that are excluded by 'noindex' tag. This means that pages cannot be searched effectively through the website itself or through other search engines like Google. This is the main complaint received by our website users.

A new website will have the ability to capture email addresses and contact information that the council can use for newsletters and additional communications to their residents.

Options

Clearing, remapping and making the content of our current site compliant and 'noindex' tagged will take a vast amount of labour hours. The site is cluttered and not easy to navigate in its layout. I recommend that the Committee agree that officers can prepare a brief and specification to go out to tender for a web designer and builder.

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The specification will include:

- separate websites for the Town Council www.abingdon.gov.uk and a Museum and history site www.abingdonmuseum.com or www.abingdoncountyhallmuseum.com
- the requirements outlined in this report
- training of ATC officer's so they can take over the day-to-day responsibility of maintaining, updating and accessibility of the website.

7. **Climate change/green implications**

7.1 None

8. **Financial/budget implications**

8.1 Below is an estimate of costs using multiple quotes gathered and rounded up to the nearest figure by the officer.

Basic re-design – confirmation of goals, site map and must have features. New visual design based on the existing brand. Simplified wireframes and homepage and key internal page templates

£1500

Content management system (CMS) rebuild. Accessibility-compliant base templates (WCAG AA ready). Includes setup of forms, news, events, and document library. Content migration: manual for a few key pages, bulk import for the rest (as feasible).

£3500

Separate sub site for museum using same CMS system, own homepage, news, exhibitions etc.

£2000

Staff Training

£400

Total cost

£7400

8.2 **Yearly costs**

Hosting and support for both sites

£550pa

Venue booking application

£600pa

Domain renewals (both sites)

£80 (approx. £40 per site)

9. **HR implications**

- 9.1 Project manager to oversee the development of the website, contracted out to external provider.

10. **Supporting papers and appendices**

- 10.1 Communications Review
- 10.2 Website summary and proposal