

## **Town Council Website Upgrade**

### Background

As part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), all local councils must sign off on a new governance requirement known as 'Assertion 10: Digital and Data Compliance'.

While previous AGAR assertions focused on financial management, Assertion 10 requires the Council to formally declare that it has taken proper steps to manage its digital presence and data protection responsibly. It covers five areas:

1. Website Accessibility: Ensuring the Council's website is usable by all residents, including those with disabilities.
2. Data Governance: Complying with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
3. Freedom of Information and transparency
4. Up to date IT policies and procedures
5. Professional Standards: Moving toward official council-owned domains (.gov.uk) for both the website and councillor emails.

### Compliance with Assertion 10

The Council complies fully with areas 2, 3, 4 and 5. However, the Current website does not meet the latest accessibility requirements (WCAG 2.2 AA). The provider has been asked to address this, but to date this has not happened and staff are not confident that it will be done.

### Risk of Non-Compliance

Failure to address these issues before the end of the 2025/26 financial year could result in:

- A 'Qualified' Internal Audit: The auditor may be unable to give the Council a clean bill of health on the AGAR.
- Reputational Risk: A website that is difficult for disabled residents to use is a breach of the Equality Act 2010.
- Increased Costs: Ad-hoc fixes to an old site often cost more in the long run than a modern, compliant site.

### Current Website

The current website was set up in 2016. Regardless of the requirements of assertion 10, a simple search of other council websites shows that there is a need to modernise and streamline the [www.wem.gov.uk](http://www.wem.gov.uk) website.

### Recommendation

**It is recommended that the Council**

- 1. Authorises the RFO to seek quotes for a website upgrade that guarantees WCAG 2.2 AA compliance and ensures the Council can confidently sign off Assertion 10 in 2026.**
- 2. Authorises the use of £1000 from General Reserves for website upgrade costs.**