

Etchingam Parish Council Website & Email Accounts

Proposed upgrade

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Background.

In November 2019 Etchingam Parish Council needed to establish a new website when the old site became unstable and not compliant with the latest regulations for accessibility, GDPR and Transparency.

After investigating a few options the Council picked NetwiseUK, a business specialising in providing websites for Town and Parish Councils, they are a registered Crown Commercial Services Supplier and the websites are guaranteed to be WCAG2.1aa compliant, regularly updated as new regulations are added.

The Council opted for the Premium package, the main features include - SSL Certificate, Upload Minutes, Upload Agendas, Upload Financials, Create Events, Add Council Members, Add Notices, News Articles, Unlimited number of pages, Operation Royal Bridge Ready, Contact Forms, Reliable UK Hosting, W3C compliant, Transparency Code Compliant, GDPR Compliant, WCAG2.1aa Compliant, Accessibility Statement, Privacy Policy, Ongoing help and support, 5gb disk space, 20gb Bandwidth, Unlimited email addresses, Daily remote backups, Facebook Feed, Virtual Tour Feature, Ability to add custom functions, Newsletter system.

Council also opted to have the dedicated email addresses for each Council member, these were set up, but for various reasons the only accounts currently active are my Councillor address and the admin and info addresses.

Why is an upgrade needed?

Until recently it has only been a recommendation that Parish Councillors use dedicated Council email addresses for Council matters, and not use personal email accounts, this has now become a requirement, we now need to get all Council members using the Council email system as soon as possible.

The current website plan gives us 10GB of email storage, this is spread over all of the email accounts and is limited to 2GB on any one account, I have occasionally had to delete older emails to free up space on my account.

If we get every member on Council emails using the current plan we will quickly run out of email storage capacity. When all ten accounts are active (7 Councillors, Clerk, Admin and Info) it is obvious the current storage availability will not be sufficient.

How to increase capacity?

My first step was to contact Adam and Steve at Netwise and find out what suggestions they had for increasing capacity, hopefully at a reasonable cost. Their suggestion is to upgrade our website package from **Premium (£330 p/a)** to **Premium Plus (£440 p/a)**.

Our current package gives us unlimited email addresses, but the 10GB storage capacity is spread over all the email accounts. If we upgrade to Premium Plus it comes with 10 email addresses, each with a 10GB storage capacity, there is the ability to add more addresses if required, each extra account costs £2 per month (paid annually). Currently we only need ten addresses, but if more were required later, they can be added at a cost of £24 p/a for each address.

Do we need the extra capacity for emails?

The simple answer to that is yes. The attachments in emails take up a lot of space, and attachments are often quite large, and we tend to get a lot more emails with large attachments than we have in the past.

Do we need the website upgrade?

Again, I think YES, the number of documents and files that we are required to upload to the website is increasing all the time, many have to stay on the site for several years. I currently have to upload a lot more documents and files to the site now than when the website was set up in 2019. On our current plan we are already using **70%** of the available disk space, that is with about three and a half years usage, an upgrade to Premium Plus would double the available disk space. There are also a couple of additional features on the website, and improvements to some features.

Are we happy with the Netwise service?

I could not be happier with the Netwise service and I hope that all members of the Council are happy with the look and usability of the website.

When we first signed up I had to pick the layout required from the options provided, send them the pages and categories that we wanted to set up the basic layout, and provided contact details and photos to add to the site, less than a week after sending the details the unpublished basic site was handed over to me to add more details ready for the site to go live.

After a week of uploading files and migrating information from the old site, with occasional email assistance from Netwise when required, always helpful, friendly and efficient, the website was published and viewable. Less than two weeks after placing the order we had a fully functional website.

Whenever a problem occurs, no matter how small, Adam and Steve respond to requests for help very quickly, and efficiently, often within minutes, and fix problems very quickly with no judgement, even when the fault was caused by me entering something incorrectly or accidentally switching a function off, their response is always ***'Don't worry, we have often done similar'***.

I think moving the website to Netwise was the best decision we could have made.

What facilities does Netwise Flexmail offer?

Councils can have as many email accounts as they wish, with no lower or upper limits. Each mailbox comes with a huge 10GB storage quota and a whole suite of features:

- each mailbox comes with 10GB (expandable and shareable between accounts) [**]
- Secure with 256 bit encryption, SSL and optional (no cost) two factor authentication
- Free email migration service
- Advanced spam filtering
- large attachments up to 50mb
- Free additional 5GB file storage including version control for documents
- Calendars
- Tasks
- Shared folders
- Email aliases
- Forwarding
- Signatures
- Out of office notifications
- Distribution lists – great for sending to the same recipients often such as monthly agendas
- Easy to use admin area for the Clerk
- Fully featured webmail or access from any client such as Mac mail, Windows, Outlook, Thunderbird etc.

On the Premium Plus account then you get ten free Flexmail accounts included in the annual fee. You can add as many additional email addresses as you need for just £2 per month per email address. That's just £24 per annum.

When will Council emails all be active?

The email addresses are all set ready to go, each Council member will be provided with access and login details so they can set up on their devices. Those details will not be sent out until a decision is made regarding the proposed upgrade. The current emails are hosted on WebMail, if we upgrade the email service will be hosted on a different platform with new access and login details, so it makes sense to wait for a decision on the upgrade.

The Pro's.

Greatly increased email storage.

The email accounts can handle large attachments up to 50mb.

Each email address has an extra 5GB of storage for documents and files, so large attachment can be moved to that storage to free up email space.

Some additional features on the email accounts.

The 10GB Storage on each email account is sharable. **[**]**

Double disk space on the website.

The Con's.

An extra £110 p/a to pay.

An extra £24 p/a for each email address over the 10 provided with the upgrade (if required)

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[]** 10GB is a large amount of space for a normal Council Member account and so you are able to share the data between the accounts as you see fit. For example. If you have 10 email accounts then you'll have **100GB** of data available. You can either leave it as default whereby each account will have a 10GB quota or, from the admin screen you can click on manage, and distribute the data how you wish, you may decide to drop the Council Members quota to 5GB but increase the Clerk, RFO and Chair quota to 20GB each. It's a useful feature.

The Netwise website

<https://parishcouncilwebsites.org.uk/>

Details of Netwise website packages

<https://parishcouncilwebsites.org.uk/prices/>

Details of Netwise Flexmail

<https://parishcouncilwebsites.org.uk/email-for-councils/>