HPC HELLESDON PARISH COUNCIL

ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

This policy provides guidelines to make sure the Hellesdon Parish Council is accessible to everyone. This includes:

- The Public
- Employees
- Elected Members
- Partner Organisations

The policy has been written both for staff and elected Members in the Council. The policy has also been written so members of the public can access it. Finally the policy has been written for partner organisations, with the aim of developing future protocols on accessibility that would cut across organisations.
This policy provides an overall framework for people to access us through:

- Printed information
- Electronic information
- Face to face contact
- Telephone

We will cover all areas of access to information including:

- Alternative formats
- Translators
- Interpreters
- Other support for people at meetings

Our policy aims to make accessible services and information:

- Straightforward
- Part of the Council's day to day work

1 Information is a right

Every member of the public has a right to access our service.
The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, places a duty on local authorities to publish race and disability equality schemes. This includes making our information accessible to everyone.
The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives every member of the public a right to request information on any aspect of our work. This means that people have a right to Parish Council information in a language or format that suits them, within reason.

1.1 How this will make a difference for the public

Our policy is committed to making information and services available:
- To individuals
- On request
- In alternative formats
- In alternative media

This applies to everything produced – website, letters, emails, leaflets, minutes, reports etc.

1.2 Accessibility and Council policies

The Council Constitution sets out for the public its key goals and its values as a local authority. Promoting ethnic integration and diversity in Hellesdon, this policy helps make us accessible to all.
This policy is part of our approach to equality and diversity. For more information please read the equality section of the Employee Handbook.
At Hellesdon Parish Council, we do not discriminate when people want to access information and services.

1.3 Commitment to accessibility

The Parish Council's policies, procedures and protocols on our website will state:
A copy of this document is also available in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio or in a different language, please contact the office if this is required.
And also have the details of our address, telephone contact number, fax number and website addresses.

2   Accessing Interpreters and Translators

This part of the policy focuses on making services accessible to people whose first language is not written or spoken English.
Interpreters are needed where a person finds that communicating in English is a barrier to getting the information, advice or service they need.
The Council has the following responsibilities regarding interpreters:
- To provide them on request
- To only use them with a person's consent

Due to the low level of request for this service, the Council does not have direct access to interpreters, however if required, we will endeavour to respond within a reasonable timescale to find a suitable person who can provide an adequate level of interpretation.

2.1 Translators

At any point in time someone may want a document translated into a language other than English. The Council does not as a matter of course translate documents into other languages. However, if required, we hold details of translators for French, German and Polish and in the case of other languages; we will endeavour to respond within a reasonable time to find a suitable person who can provide an adequate level of translation. There are also several good websites that provide electronic translation but care must be taken as these translations are not always completely accurate.

2.3 Confidentiality

Staff will ensure that both translators and interpreters sign a written undertaking that they will keep all information being translated or interpreted as confidential.

3 Accessible Information: Using Plain Language

Plain language is about making sure that everything we write is clear to read.
The Plain English Campaign define Plain English as 'something that the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they read it'.
The Plain English Campaign, as detailed on their website www.plainenglish.co.uk, list what they consider plain language to be:
- Using 'you' and 'we'
- Not being afraid to give instructions
- Using positive language
- Avoiding jargon
- Explaining what acronyms stand for, such as Citizen's Advice Bureau instead of CAB
- Using words rather than abbreviations or symbols, for example care of, not c/o
- Keeping sentences and paragraphs short (aim for maximum sentences of 15-20 words)
- Using headings to break up writing
- Using the active voice 'I will eat jelly' rather than the passive voice 'jelly will be eaten by me'
- Choosing a photograph, diagram or illustration to replace long written descriptions
- Only using basic punctuation. ,;:/()
- Avoiding phrases such as inter alia and raison d'être, where an English equivalent can be used.

4 Accessible Information: Keeping documents clear

Clear print is a design that takes into account a wider audience.

4.1 Type size

The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and Action for Blind People recommend font size 14 as a minimum. The Council's documents will be supplied in this font upon request.

4.2 Type weight

Medium or **bold weight fonts** are more accessible than light ones.

4.3 Typeface

The Council uses Calibri minimum font size 11 for day to day use. Simulated handwriting and elaborate typefaces are difficult to read and should not be used.

4.4 Contrast

Aim for a clear colour contrast. Black text on a white background and **strong blue text on a yellow background** provide the best contrast. Inks which are of a darker tone of the same colour as the paper should be avoided. People with colour blindness may have problems distinguishing reds or greens. When using white type, make sure the background is dark to provide good contrast.

4.5 Using paper

Avoid using glossy paper because the glare makes it difficult to read and choose uncoated paper or matt. Thin paper should not be used when printing documents on both sides. If the text is showing through from the reverse side, then the paper is too thin and bold and large text is more likely to show through. Alternatively we will use a paper with a minimum density of 80sgm for double sided printing.

4.6 Type styles

Avoid sentences using CAPITAL LETTERS, *italics* or underlined text as these are generally harder to read. **Bold** is more accessible but only in small amounts.

4.7 Page layout and word spacing

To make a document accessible:
- Keep the same space between each word
- Do not condense or s t r e t c h words
- Try not to write more than 60-70 letters per line
- Do not split words at the end of lines
- Align text to the left margin so it is easy to find the start and finish of each line
- Avoid justified text as it creates uneven spacing between words
- Break information down into sections with titles and sub titles.

4.8 Navigational aids

It is good practice to use numbered headings and paragraphs in long documents, also to use a contents list or index to guide readers to relevant sections and pages. It is also helpful to place clear page numbers in the same position on each page, and leaving a space between paragraphs make reading easier.

4.9 Illustrations

Where possible try not to write letters over pictures.

4.10 Large print

Large print documents must be made available on request. The RNIB defines large print as a minimum font size of Point 14. Action for Blind People recommend anything between Point 14 to Point 22. It is good practice to ask people what size they would like, as no single size suits everyone. With long documents it is a good idea to ask the person whether they want all or part of a document made available in large print. In some cases they may only want a summary.

5 Accessible Information in alternative formats
The Council has a responsibility to make available materials in alternative formats.

5.1 Electronic information

Electronically held information can be adapted or translated before being sent out. In some cases readers will have adaptations to their computers so all they will need is an e-mail or CD-ROM.

5.2 Coloured paper

Printing material in a different colour or onto coloured paper can help some readers with dyslexia. It is important to ask the individual reader what is best for them.

5.3 Audio

When putting information into an audio form the Council will consider commissioning a professional firm to do it. Appendix 1 is a list of helpful organisations.

5.4 Braille

Some people prefer information in Braille. Before responding to requests for information in Braille it is important to check that the person would rather have information in Braille than on tape. The appendix gives details of organisations that can translate documents into Braille.

5.5 Translation

Translation is a critical way to make documents accessible to people who read in other languages. All requests for translation must be met in the language requested.

5.6 British sign language in video clips

British Sign Language is recognised by government as a language in its own right and should be treated on par with any other language.

5.7 Using pictorial information

Many people may find information easier to understand if text is supported by illustrations.
These could include:
- Photos
- Flow charts
- Tables

- Diagrams

MENCAP provide helpful information on how to make printed information accessible for people with learning difficulties and literacy difficulties – www.mencap.org.uk
Key points to remember when illustrating a printed text:
- Make sure the text is in plain language.
- Make sure the font is a large size.

Useful Information and Guidance
Learning disabilities : Mencap
www.mencap.org.uk
Visual impairments/blindness: Royal National Institute for the Blind
www.rnib.org.uk
The Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind
www.nnab.org.uk
Hearing impairments/deafness: Royal National Institute for the Deaf
www.rnid.org.uk
Plain English Campaign
www.plainenglish.co.uk
E-Com Communications (can translate documents into Braille, audio, easy-read or large print etc)
www.e-communications.co.uk
Norwich Citizens Advice Bureau
Tel: 01603 660857