HELLESDON PARISH COUNCIL

Diamond Jubilee Lodge, Wood View Road, Hellesdon, Norwich NR6 5QB
Tel: 01603 301751 email: contact@hellesdon-pc.gov.uk www.hellesdon-pc.gov.uk

Accessibility to Information 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

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, where reasonable and practicable.

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 including, but not limited to website, letters, emails, leaflets, minutes, social media posts and reports.

1.2 Accessibility and Council Policies

This policy is part of our approach to supporting equality and diversity. At Hellesdon Parish Council, we do not discriminate when people want to access information and services.

1.3 Commitment to accessibility

Copies of council documents can be made available in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio or in a different language, if requested.
Council documents should be checked for accessibility issues prior to publishing electronically or being emailed, to ensure that they can be read by screen readers.

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, 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.

3 Accessible Information: Using Plain Language

Plain language is about making sure that everything we write is clear to read and be understood.

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. This includes:

- Keep your sentences short
- Use 'you' and 'we'
- Use words that are appropriate for the reader
- Don't be afraid to give instructions
- Use lists where appropriate

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.

4.6 Type styles

Avoid sentences using CAPITAL LETTERS, *italics* or <u>underlined</u> 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. Use 'Alt Text' when pictures in a document are to be placed online or emailed.

4.10 Watermarks

Watermarks can be confusing to a reader, although it is very useful tool especially for DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL documents. An alternative is to state DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL in large bold print at the beginning of the document and on top of each page.

4.11 Large print

Large print documents must be made available on request. The RNIB defines large print as a minimum font size of Point 16. Action for Blind People recommend anything between Point 16 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 many cases parishioners may have screen readers or translators.

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 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 a document that is accessible via a screen reader.

5.4 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.

5.5 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 are to use bigger text and bullet points, and to keep writing at a minimum. Too much colour can make reading harder for someone as well.

6 Digital Information

The Council has a responsibility to make digital information accessible

6.1 Website

Since September 2020, all parish, town & borough councils must have a website that complies with Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA rating so that it meets Accessibility Guidelines as set in the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility regulations. A policy statement must be place on the website detailing its accessibility.

6.2 Pictures

Pictures that are in digital format for the public to access, should have an alt. text or a picture description so that they are accessible by screen readers.

6.3 Documents

Documents that are designed to be viewed digitally should be created with accessibility in mind. All Microsoft documents should be created using the Accessibility Checker function and the correctly ordered styles.

APPENDIX 1: 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
Norwich Citizens Advice Bureau
Tel: 01603 660857