



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

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UPGRADING WEBSITE THEME

Netwise have decided to release a new theme for their websites that is faster, more reliable and encompasses all the latest regulations and technology. A WordPress theme is a tool to change the layout and design of your website. Themes customise the appearance of your site, including the layout, typography, colour, and other design elements.

Why is a new theme needed?

In April 2015 WordPress version 3.76 was current. In December 2020 WordPress version 5.6 is being released. Between then and now, WordPress has released 391 updates.

WordPress themes have a life cycle simply because the technology that supports them advances. As Wordpress core developers continue to push Wordpress updates (which they will do habitually in days, months, and years-to-come) with new features and security solutions through patches and new versions, the theme that you are using will not work as well with the new Wordpress core updates, or as well today as it did the first day that it was created.

In the short term this can be avoided by simply turning off Wordpress auto-updates or by not updating your Wordpress core when regular Wordpress updates are available, but you may notice that your version of the Wordpress core software also becomes buggy and has security flaws as hackers identify new security vulnerabilities, or as new Wordpress features provided by Wordpress core come to fruition and old features become legacy or outdated and also unsupported in the ways they were supported before.

Netwise's current theme is almost five years old and whilst it still works reasonably well, they are conscious that it's coming towards end of life. They have developed a new theme that is faster, more lightweight and meets with all the new coding standards as well as the regulations that local authorities need to adhere to.

NetWise V2 is 100% compliant with WCAG2.1aa accessibility regulations, in addition, it has built in functions for Operation London Bridge, Forth Bridge and Menai Bridge in the event of the death of a senior Royal.

There are improved functions such as the document system which will allow for documents to be published as HTML (no coding needed) pages and as PDF downloads. This complies with Government Digital Service guidelines about publishing and the need to publish by HTML wherever possible. Although this is only a recommendation at present, there is an expectation that it will become a requirement in future years.

The new theme uses fewer plugins which makes for a faster, more reliable and secure website.

Example sites:

<http://keighley.nwclients.co.uk/>

<http://offham.nwclients.co.uk/>

<https://v2demo.nwclients.co.uk/>

Content would be transferred to the new theme. We can decide on the layout of the homepage, as we currently do, but it would be in the new look and feel and in our colours. If we want old PDFs to display as html pages these would have to be created manually.

Options

1. We do not upgrade but the existing theme will not be supported by Netwise after June 2021.
2. We upgrade with a one off-cost of £199. We currently pay £300 a year.
3. We could upgrade to the Premium Plus Package for £400 a year which would give the advantage of doubling our disk space and we would upgrade to v2 for free.

Recommendations

That members of Full Council are asked to decide which of the three options they wish to choose.

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