REPORT ON ROPLEY VILLAGE WEBSITE

FEBRUARY 2024 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

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Introduction

The Ropley village website https://www.myropley.org.uk/ is a community asset for the parish.

Ropley Parish Council owns the domain name and provides financial support for the website with a grant for web-hosting services.

The local government Transparency Code[1] requires parish councils to publish specific information on a website which is available to members of the public free of charge. The Ropley village website has a section for parish council matters.

 What is the Ropley village website used for?

- Parish council business
- Promotion of local community events
- Publication of local news
- Static information about clubs, community services etc which is refreshed once a year

The feature for users to add comments is switched off.

How many people visit the website?

We are now starting to collect information about the use of the website. This is not entirely straightforward as trawler bots can distort the figures. The website administrator has started to block many of them.

Figure 1 shows the number of page hits ('visits') and the number of unique users ('visitors') which have visited the website from 17 to 24 January 2024. For example on 23 January, there were 33 unique users visiting the website, and they looked at 81 pages.

Figure 1

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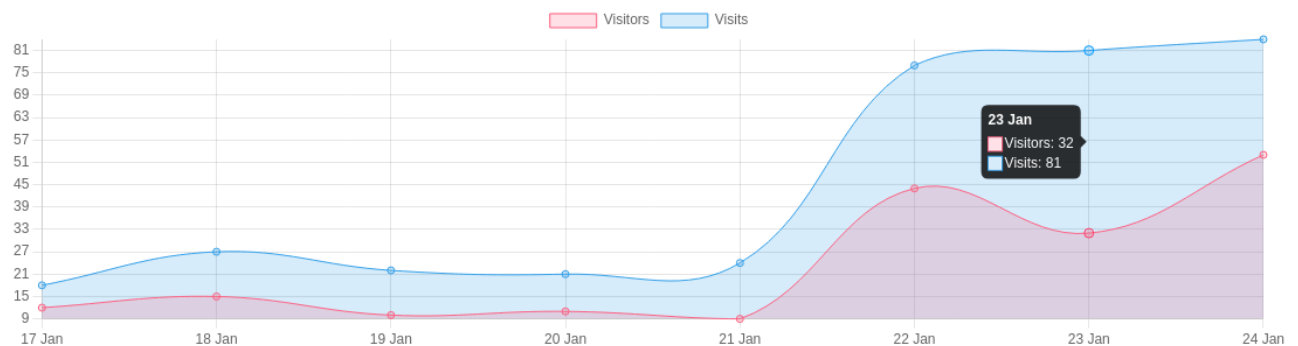
[1] See Appendix for information about the Transparency Code

Figure 2 shows the pages that were visited the most frequently over seven days in January.

Figure 2

Page Title	Visits
Your voice matters on plan for the future of East Hampshire	40
Home Page	36
Update on Webb Lane and its right of way status	24
Events	19
Take your DIY waste to the local tip	19
Meetings	17
Volunteers needed to help update Ropley's Neighbourhood Plan	16
Gascoigne Lane access to the Recreation Ground	16
Parish Council	12
Community Tea Concert	9

Content management

We are fortunate to have a volunteer editor with many years of experience of adding content to the website. We plan to train the parish council clerk and the parish councillor responsible for communication, so that they can add content when the volunteer is not available. It is hoped that the parish clerk will add parish council meeting papers and finance information to the website in future.

What are the sources of content?

All content is added by the volunteer editor. The main sources of content are set out below.

Parish Council business

- Parish clerk
- Parish councillor responsible for communication

Events

- primarily from local residents - typically particular individuals who advise of their own organisation's events, such as Ropley Society, Ropley Horti Society, Friends of St Peter's, Cinema at Ropley, etc (~ 80%)
- secondarily from RPC - mainly establishing recurring council meetings & ad hoc council-type public events advised by Becky (~10%)
- AND - as forwarded by the BMRT editors - this is generally a back-up source - for events where the editor has not been advised directly (~10%)

News

- primarily from RPC /other councillors - about footpaths, broadband, what's happening in EDHC/HCC, available grants, etc (~60%)
- secondarily from organisational reps & BMRT (~20% each)
- occasionally the editor generates a news item from event material sent

Static information about clubs, community services etc

- primarily RPC-driven - meeting minutes, agenda & supporting material, audit info, grants, policies, footpath info, councillor details, minor content improvements, the annual static content refresh driven by RPC, etc (>99%?)
- secondarily from organisational reps (< 1%)

Pre-publication checks

The editor checks information before adding it to the website as follows:

- They only accept material that comes from a local resident or organisation and that they think will be relevant to Ropley residents.
- If they deem the material suitable for publication, they upload the material as requested, and email the source to confirm their action. The source's name is generally included on the website for accountability.
- If they deem the material is not suitable for the website, the editor will do one of the following:
    - Send it to BMRT editors e.g. adverts
    - Send it to village special interest group
    - Refer it to the parish councillor with responsibility for communication
    - Respond without publicising

Website administration

We are fortunate to have a volunteer with the right skills to respond in a timely fashion with matters relating to the administration of the website, for example dealing with error messages and advising on technical matters.

Recommendation

Parish councillors are asked to consider the following recommendation:

A disclaimer should be added to the website as follows:

'Ropley Parish Council assumes no responsibility or liability for the content of this website.'

APPENDIX Local Government Transparency Code

The following information has been copied from the HALC website

https://hampshirealcsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb/articles/4773225527569-Local-Government-Transparency-Code

The Local Government Transparency Code was introduced by the government in 2015 with the aim of giving citizens the ability to access information more easily about their local authority.

The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities sets out the information that all parish and town councils, with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000, must publish. These parish and town councils can also declare themselves exempt from external audit under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

There is a separate code for parish and town councils with a turnover exceeding £200,000 and these councils, as best practice, **should** publish the information specified. If their gross annual income or expenditure is above £6.5m then they **must** publish the information.

For councils with a turnover between £25,000 and £200,000, we advise that they are as transparent as they can possibly be and follow the recommendations in this guidance note.

The transparency code enables local electors to access information about the council's accounts and governance.

Councils with turnover exceeding £200,000

For larger parish and town councils, full details of the information that should be published are available on the government website here.

When must information be published?

The information above must be published on the first occasion, not later than 1st July 2015, and thereafter, not less than annually by 1st July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates.

Where should the information be published?

The information must be published on a website which is available to members of the public free of charge. If the council does not have its own website, then it can be published on the district or unitary authority website.