Report

The last external audit incorporated a new question on the Governance Statement. Assertion 10. *"We have put in place arrangements for effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review."* To which the council responded 'NO' and offered the following statement by way of explanation:

> *'Referring to advice from CALC received on April 8, 2026. The following items were found to be missing: 1. An 'Accessibility Statement' on the website 2. No specific 'IT policy' has been adopted by the council 3. A check revealed that the council's website indicates 16 instances where the WCAG 2.2 AA standard of accessibility category A (must do) occurs. For these reasons the box 10 assertion is ticked 'No' Councillors noted that the council plan includes a review of the website before 2027 and committed to the adoption of an IT policy in 2027. The council had current adopted policy in effect for GDPR 2016, the Data Protection Act 2018, and met transparency requirements in relation to the Freedom of Information Act and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.'*

To meet the obligations under assertion 10 the council's website should be hosted on a 'gov.uk' domain and both councillors and staff should use council and not personal email addresses associated with that domain (Imap and not Pop3) to simplify and comply with FOI and data privacy policy. Having done these things, the council should adopt an IT Policy to complete the steps necessary to answer the question in assertion 10 'YES'

The new website should address the following issues:

1. **Accessibility** | Incorporate an accessibility statement (a public commitment explaining how the website accommodates users with disabilities noting any known limitations, and providing a contact email for users who need help or wish to report issues the Accessibility Standard should be referenced such as WCAG 2.2 Level AA),
2. **Website** | The website should conform to the WCAG 2.2 AA Accessibility Standard[i].
3. **Transparency** | Parish and Town councils are expected to uphold the highest standards of transparency and openness. To support this objective, the government has introduced two transparency codes: one for larger councils with an annual turnover exceeding £200,000 (2015)[ii] and another for smaller councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 (2014)[iii]. Although the transparency codes require compliance from councils within these turnover brackets, NALC encourages parish and town councils with annual turnovers under £200,000 and above £25,000 to adhere to the transparency code for smaller councils at a minimum.
4. **Required Publications** | The transparency code for smaller councils came into effect on 1 April 2015. This code mandates that smaller councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 must publish specific financial and administrative information online, making it accessible to the public. The goal is to provide taxpayers with a clear understanding of the authority's activities, spending, and governance. From April 2015, parish and town councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 must publish the following information online (and we do do all of these on the existing website):
    a. all items of expenditure above £100,
    b. end-of-year accounts/accounting statement,

c. annual governance statement,
d. internal auditor's report,
e. list of councillor or member responsibilities,
f. details of public land and building assets
g. minutes, agendas, and meeting papers of formal meetings.
h. In addition, the external auditors report should be published online and on notice boards as a requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, local authorities (including principal councils, town councils, and parish councils) must make the completed external audit report and certificate available to the public.

Where we are now.

Currently the Town Council's website www.kirkby-stephen.com last reworked in 2018, has 8 main menu items and 49 sub menu items many of which are out of date, contain broken links or obsolete information. The website is dated with some content going back to 2009 and does not reflect current browsing practices. It attempts to be a directory for Kirkby Stephen listing the availability of banks, fire service, police doctors etc. alongside accommodation providers. Although in practice no one would use the council's site as a source for this kind of information and this information would sit better on the UEVIC website.

It is recommended that the council establishes a new website that meets current simpler expectations of Local Council website listed above and which will pass external audit and conform to an appropriate Accessibility Standard[iv]

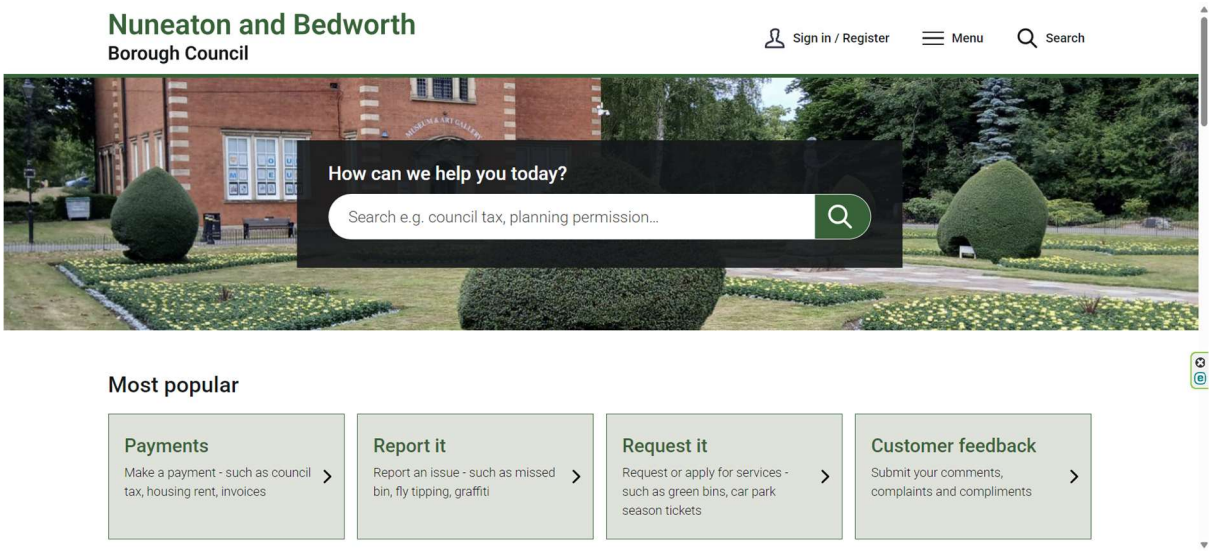
Nuneaton and Bedworth's website is regarded as the best example of an accessible council website in the UK. A simple clean look is part of the accessibility standard.

I'd like to explore the principle of retaining appropriate content as analysed in the table below for a gov.uk website and adding links/profile for councillors and front-page news/noticeboard. Then discuss with the UECIC the transfer of material relevant to tourism along with the www.kirkby-stephen.com domain.

I want to confirm that the council is happy with this direction of travel before obtaining costings and updating this report for a resolution of the council.

Christian Barnes

3/9/2026


Nuneaton and Bedworth
Borough Council
Sign in / Register
Menu
Search
How can we help you today?
Search e.g. council tax, planning permission...
Most popular
Payments
Make a payment - such as council tax, housing rent, invoices
Report it
Report an issue - such as missed bin, fly tipping, graffiti
Request it
Request or apply for services - such as green bins, car park season tickets
Customer feedback
Submit your comments, complaints and compliments

Kirkby Stephen Town Council, Existing Website Content Analysis

Key Column A retain, Column B Sub Menu for gov.uk, Column C Possible sub menu for gov.uk D to transfer to UECIC with .com website, ~~strikethough~~ = delete altogether, yellow duplicate content either keep or allocate to one or the other site.

	A	B	C	D
	Menu	Sub menu (Council 'gov.uk')	Sub Menu (Community 'gov.uk')	Sub Menu (Tourism '.com')
1	Home			
2	Community	~~Education~~		
3		~~Emergency Services~~		
4		~~Farming Community~~		
5		~~Have your say~~		
6		~~Health~~		
7		~~Other Upper Eden Parishes~~		
8		~~Soulby~~		
9		~~Upper Eden Community Plan~~		
10			Community & Council Centre	
11			Community Buildings and Rooms	Community Buildings and Rooms
12			Good Neighbours	
13			Volunteering & Community Groups	
14				Library
15				Places of Worship
16				Transport
17	Council	Kirkby Stephen Town Council, Agendas, Minutes Reports		
18		Kirkby Stephen Town Council, Finance		
19		Kirkby Stephen Town Council, Annual Publications		
20		Kirkby Stephen Town Council, Policies & Documents		
21		~~Town Plan (2014)~~		
22			Community Newsletter	
23			Kirkby Stephen Market (For Traders)	Kirkby Stephen Market (For the Public)

24			Community and Council Centre	
25		~~Contact us~~		
26	What's on		August 1-31	August 1-31
27			September 1-31	September 1-31
28	~~Accomodation~~			Bed & Breakfast
29				Self Catering
30	~~Visit~~			Arts Culture and Learning
31				Places to Eat and Drink
32				Historic Sites
33				Outdoor Activities
34				Places to Visit
35				Shopping
36				Sports
37				Poetry Path
38	~~Business~~	~~Business Directory~~		
39		~~Banking Services~~		
40		~~Business Location~~		
41		~~Transport Links~~		
42		~~Submit your premises~~		
43	~~Local History~~			A Short History of Kirkby Stephen
44				The Droving Tradition
45				Nine Standards
46				The Manorial Boundaries
47				Family History
48				Andres De Harcla
49				Charter Fair (09 Gallery)

References

[i] WCAG22 Website (Accessed 3/9/2026)
https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/

[ii] Transparency Code 2015
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-transparency-code-2015/local-government-transparency-code-2015

[iii] Transparency Code 2014
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ef9cae5274a2e87db311f/Transparency_Code_for_Smaller_Authorities.pdf

[iv] Gov.uk Guidance on Website Accessibility
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps