Stillingfleet Village Website Proposal

Proposal addressed to: Stillingfleet Parish Council
Proposal by: Peter Orange, 4 Dales Court, Stillingfleet
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Introduction

I am a local resident in Stillingfleet and I would like to propose a community website for the village of Stillingfleet which I am volunteering to build and would like to work with Stillingfleet Parish Council to achieve this.

I am a professional working full-time for company as a digital marketer with over 13 years' professional experience and have skills in website building and configuration. I also work in a freelance capacity as outlined on **https://www.orangetree.works.**

My motivation is to use my skills to build a website that benefits our community.

Current Situation

The community of Stillingfleet with a population of some 405 people (2011 census) relies upon the Parish Magazine (shared with Escrick and Naburn), a couple of Facebook Groups/Pages 'Stillingfleet Community Chat' Group, 'Stillingfleet Village Institute' Page and village noticeboards to communicate and inform village residents – other than word of mouth.

List of Stillingfleet specific media.

1. The **Parish Magazine** mainly contains notices for events relating to our Churches, Village Institute and sometimes other local community events.
2. The **Facebook Group 'Stillingfleet Community Chat'** is followed by 198 members connected to the village, managed by volunteers and is a live feed of posts from villagers which is a brilliant forum for discussion and support online.
3. The **'Stillingfleet Village Institute' Facebook page** has 93 followers and promotes events for the institute there, but mainly posts to the Community Chat Group as it has a bigger audience.
4. The **Stillingfleet Parish Council website** serves as a source of information relating purely to the administration of the Parish itself and the Green.
5. The **Stillingfleet Village Institute** used to have website, but was not maintained and a decision was made to not bring it back.
6. There is a **Wikipedia page for Stillingfleet** which is a public source of information about the history of the village and references to publish records, but contains very little information.

Access to information about the village *(other than Parish council minutes and policy)* that helps inform local residents is broadly unavailable on the internet (online) or offline in print.

Communications of notices on events or other news is restricted to online Facebook Groups or the printed Parish Magazine. While the magazine is distributed to village

households in the member Parishes it is not a directory of information and isn't easily accessible outside the Parishes in print or online.

Not all village residents choose to use social media – so those communications have limitations to reach all residents. Even if you are a member of a Facebook Group, news posts can soon disappear pushed down by newer content – so someone may simply not see that content. A Facebook Page or Group is not a directory of information – and its content is gated (requiring sign-up to Facebook).

The promotion of events for the community or as fundraising is restricted to a social media group or to the parish magazine and not searchable or accessible in the public domain online. This limits wider access and the potential reach for any efforts to gain wider interest that maybe sought.

Website Proposal

While the village has some forms of media that helps keep local residents informed, as outlined it is either gated on a social media platform or in a monthly printed newsletter. To compliment these existing communication channels, I propose a website should be built for Stillingfleet village which is in the public domain and easily discoverable.

The website would be designed to be a consistent source of useful information for local reference, support local organisations and business, communicate recent notices and facilitate the activities of the community.

The website's governance should likely sit with Stillingfleet Parish Council to ensure its legitimacy and be part of a formal organisation structure which would be able to sustain long-term management of the website for the benefit of the village.

Village Website Objectives

To promote:

- Reliable information about the village and local facilities
- Local community groups and their activities
- Cohesion and a good sense of community
- Local events / organisations (e.g. church or village institute)
- Local business / services and help residents identify useful local businesses etc.
- Local notices and help local residents keep up to date
- Stillingfleet's history and achievements

Benchmark village websites

Reviewing other village websites can be a good way to get ideas and to know what works well. Below is a selection of village websites I am aware of that are in my view relatively well-structured.

Village websites vary in their structure and design. Some sites include information for the Parish council, others don't.

From the examples below, their identity is focused on the name of the village rather than associated with any particular organisation. The sites tend to have low design values, low functional requirements and focused as information only sites – most likely to be able to be low cost and require low maintenance.

- Escrick https://www.escrick.org.uk/
- Naburn https://www.naburnvillage.org/
- Sherrif Hutton https://www.sheriffhutton.co.uk/
- Hovingham https://hovingham.org.uk/

Available domains

Having a unique domain gives the site a more memorable address and brand. Owning a domain is not expensive, some example as follows:

- Stillingfleet.org.uk £11.99 a year
- Stillingfleet.info £15 a year
- Stillingfleet.org £10 a year *(already reserved by me)*
- Stillingfleet.net £10 year

I would suggest the website buys a domain such as one of the above options.

Website Platform Technology

Website platforms vary wildly in their feature offering and pricing. Websites can become very expensive and sometimes needlessly so – but the choice of technology platform and its output is dependent upon the desired purpose and budget.

Web technology has also advanced tremendously allowing non-web designers the ability to create online presence. For a commercial business a cheaper solution may have negative results, but for a local community I would recommend a technology website solution from a reputable supplier that provides the best range of optional features and integrations at a low cost, and at the same time has a low threshold requirement of technical skill to manage and maintain.

I would recommend a platform such as **wix.com** which has an extensive amount of optional functionality out of the box that doesn't require huge technical expertise to manage, and its business model is based upon a monthly subscription fee (no server hosting fees).

Pricing for Wix is in a range from £11 to £20 a month (£132 - £240 per year) dependent on desired functionality. For example, additional functionality could be ticketing for events, or set up to process transactions or to manage reoccurring subscriptions.

https://www.wix.com/upgrade/website

Other platforms like Wordpress.com, Squarespace, Shopify and others all would require higher levels of customisation, technical expertise and/or paid-for plugins to build-in some features that wix.com has out of the box. A disadvantage Wix has however is it is highly templated in terms of design and so it is more limited in terms of design customisations.

Example Wix.com templates
https://www.wix.com/website/templates/html/communities

Funding the website

The cost of a website depends entirely on the number of pages, design and technical specification. For a low spec website, no bespoke coding, template driven and more focused on-site configuration and content management - this might still cost anywhere between £500 to £2500 for a professional to build.

I would like to volunteer my time and skills to build the website for the village. This would be a cost saving for the project with the intention of helping to ensure it is something we can achieve for the village.

There would be ongoing costs such as the platform and annual domain fee. Ideas for funding are:

- Part funded by local businesses, charging advertising space on the site for a nominal annual fee.
- Online sales e.g. Percentage of ticket sales or even some merchandise
- Donations
- Website could form part of the Parish Council's annual expenditure
- Organisations e.g. Stillingfleet Village Institute or other contribute an agreed amount to funding.
- Grant funding e.g. from North Yorkshire County Council e.g. NYCC Stronger Communities Programme {inspire and achieve together}

Maintaining the website

The website should ideally be governed by the Stillingfleet Parish Council benefitting from the organisation's management structure and existing financial structure. The website may need a sponsor on the committee to be responsible for its governance and upkeep.

Upkeep can be delegated to willing volunteers in the community and be given editor privileges to maintain content. Certain members could be nominated to manage parts of the site, e.g. events or notices, or specific organisation pages.

There should probably be one 'site administrator' responsible for the technical upkeep of the site and may be a main point of contact or responsible for managing other contributors.

Overleaf is a proposed website structure:

Website Site Structure

Below is a rough idea for the structure of the website.

- Home
- About
    - Village History
    - Parish council
    - Local walks
- Community
    - Clubs
    - The Green
    - Playground
    - Churches
    - Services & Information
    - Schools & Pre-school
- Facilities
    - Bus times
    - GP surgery
    - Defibrillator
    - Parish Magazine
    - Useful Links
- Village Institute
    - Facilities
    - Bookings
- Local Business (examples)
    - Stillingfleet Gardens
    - Croft Livery Yard
    - Snowlandia kennels
    - Caravan Park
    - Trades
- Events Calendar
- Notices
- Contact

Village Website Next steps

- Agree as a project
- Governance
- Funding / partnerships
- Agreed objectives
- Website scope and specification
- Domain
- Select platform
- Site structure
- Branding / template choice
- Build / set-up
- Identify / engage local experts to help with content
- Create / populate with content
- Approval
- Launch

End.

Contact

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