

Website accessibility policy

An accessible site is one that accommodates the full range of users. An accessible website does not exclude anybody due to their abilities, or the method they choose to access the web. A well designed website works for everyone.



www.tandridge.gov.uk

We can provide this document in a range of languages and formats on request by calling Customer Services on 01883 722000. It is also available on the Tandridge website at www.tandridge.gov.uk.

1. Introduction

Tandridge District Council has a duty to provide information accessible to all sections of our community, regardless of ability.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act service providers must not discriminate against a person for a reason connected with their disability. They must also make reasonable adjustments to the way they offer their services. This applies as much to websites, as it does to ensure wheelchair access to council buildings is possible.

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Accessible websites prioritise clear content, structure and ease of navigation over complex design. This does not mean they can't be visually attractive or use the latest web technologies, as long as all information is still accessible to users.

The Council is committed to equality and diversity. More information about Equalities and Diversity Scheme and Disability Scheme can be found on the following webpage: http://www.tandridge.gov.uk/YourCouncil/Access/equality_diversity_scheme.htm

This policy follows the principles set out in the scheme.

2. Objectives

- To present information about council services in an accessible and cost effective way.
- To encourage two way communication and feedback.
- To provide access to Council information 24/7.
- To make our website easy to use and navigate.
- To encourage users to make transactions such as payments and complete forms.
- To encourage users to make the website the first place they look for Council information.
- To meet the [W3C WCAG 2.0](#).Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

3. Strategy

To create and maintain a website designed to meet all customer needs using the available technology and within budget.

To clearly explain where we are not currently able to do this and how else services can be accessed.

4. Target audience and core tasks

Our target audiences are:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Visitors
- Central government
- Staff

Our target audiences should be able to get information about the Council and its services from the website, without the need to visit or telephone the Council. The advantage for customers is they can contact the Council when and where it is convenient for them.

5. Identifying needs

In developing our website we have always followed best practice, including government guidance, Socitm (Society of Information Technology Managers), RNIB and RNID.

Other websites are also visited to assess best practice and find out what can be developed for the Council's website.

When we make changes to our website we carry out user testing with a cross section of our staff, including those with disabilities. We also invite feedback from users.

We have a survey on our website <http://www.tandridge.gov.uk/webforms/webform.htm> in which we invite users to give feedback.

There is a [Contact us](#) form available and a [report a problem](#) page with links to forms for key areas.

The Surrey Website Managers group has also reviewed the top transactions on the other Surrey councils websites, based on a series of Socitm style questions. This feedback has led to improvements.

We recognise we need to carry out more user testing generally, but with limited budgets we need to find cost effective ways of doing this.

We also use the Tandridge Access Group as a "critical friend" to review our website and provide feedback.

Improving, developing and maintaining the website is an ongoing challenge and the speed with which technology develops raises users expectations on an almost daily basis, but we are committed to this, as our website is a key source of information for residents.

We recognise it is also a way of reducing the costs of handling enquiries which would otherwise be made in person, or by phone.

5. Making our website accessible

Standards and guidelines

The government requires all public sector websites meet the W3C's guidelines on accessibility to WAI Level Double-A standard.

We aim to reach conformance level Double-A (and in places Triple-A) from the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative Guidelines, including Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Version 1.0. The site is built to follow the requirements and best practice of the following guidelines and standards:

- [Guidelines for UK Government Websites](#)
- [eGIF \(eGovernment Interoperability Framework\) Version 6.1:](#)
- [eGMS \(eGovernment Metadata Standard\) Version 3.0:](#)
- [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative Guidelines](#), including Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Version 1.0:
- [W3C Recommendations](#), including W3C XHTML 1.0 Specification

The Accessibility Guidelines explain how to make web content accessible to people with disabilities. We are working towards updating the standards to meet W3C WCAG 2.0. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Not all our website is fully accessible to Double-A. With thousands of pages, managed by different people it is very difficult to ensure 100% compliance. We do use automated checking tools to help maintain accessibility, links and spelling - more information is available on [Website standards and statistics](#)

Some parts of the website are provided by third party systems, which are harder to manage and make changes to. This includes our planning application and building control system, councillors system and payments. We work with the companies supplying the systems to make sure these are as accessible as the main website.

Some areas of our website, including maps, use [JavaScript](#), which some people cannot access, although these technologies are now much more accessible than they used to be. In these areas, we do our best to give alternative ways of accessing the information.

Navigation

The navigation is consistent across the whole site to make finding information easier and we use [cascading style sheets](#). Certain pages including the A to Z, Search, Accessibility, Site Map, Disclaimer, Contact us are available from every single page on the website.

The main menus are also available from all the pages and information is arranged in topics and not by department.

To help people find their way around the site we use:

- The [Accesskeys](#) system, which gives links to main pages using short cut keys.
- The [Search](#) appears on every page and allows you to search the whole site for specific information.
- An [A-Z](#) which helps people find pages quickly and easily.
- A [Site map](#) which lists all the pages in each category of the website
- A breadcrumb trail which helps users can see what web page they are on by looking at the text that appears above the page title. They can click on any of the links in the path to return to pages they have looked at before.
- Links in the top bar to some of the accessible tools including content, larger text, listen to the website etc.

Visually impaired or language/reading difficulties

We use Readspeak which reads out text and highlights words as they are read. This helps users with reading difficulties, mild vision difficulties or if English is not their first language. We also give links to the RNIB website and the British Dyslexia Association's website.

Pdfs may also be read using the current version of Acrobat Reader, which has improved accessibility features and includes the facility to read the text out loud.

Hard of hearing

We no longer have a minicom system, as it was not well used and not cost effective to maintain. We are able to offer a hearing loop for visitors to the offices. This means those who are hard of hearing who have a hearing aid with a T-switch can use the loop to amplify what is being said at our reception and in our meeting rooms. This is available in our reception, council chamber and interview rooms.

We can also arrange to receive text messages, as most of our officers have mobile phones. As communication will usually be with individual officers, arrangements for this are made on a case by case basis and need to be requested.

Text size

We show people how to make changes to text sizes themselves, rather than having a button to press to change the sizes. By doing this we hope we can help users change the text size on any website they visit.

Downloading documents

Documents are mainly provided in PDF (Portable Document Format) for downloading from the website. The current version of Acrobat Reader has improved accessibility features and includes the facility to read the text out loud.

Images

We have avoided using lots of pictures in the website to ensure quick download times and access to information. Where images have been used we have added 'Alt' tags - text alternatives so users know what the image is meant to convey even if it does not load, the images are switched off, or they are using an assistive technology like a screen reader to browse the web page rather than view.

Screen resolution

The site is best viewed using a screen resolution of 800 x 600 or higher and is designed to be compatible with a number of browsers.

Javascript

Some areas of our website use JavaScript, which some people cannot access, although these technologies are much more accessible than they used to be. In these areas, we do our best to give alternative ways of accessing the information.

Electronic Forms (e-forms)

We use e-forms on the site to help users give us feedback, report problems, book services and request information. Our e-forms have been designed to be as easy to use and accessible as possible, but they do use JavaScript.

Tables

Tables have relative width - they resize themselves to fit the browser so users don't have to scroll to view them. We only use tables on the site when they are the most appropriate way

of presenting content and ensure they are coded correctly so people using assistive technologies, such as screen readers can access them.

Links

Links are written to make sense out of context, as many browsers can extract a list of links from a page.

Translation and other languages

We provide the ability to translate pages.

Video/audio

For multimedia content, we aim to provide text transcripts of the content.

Plain English

We aim to use plain language throughout the site and try to avoid using unnecessary jargon and acronyms. Some text documents such as committee agendas and minutes may contain more complex or technical language.

6. Areas unlikely to be fully accessible

Our website is designed to be fully accessible to Double-A standard, but with thousands of pages it is very difficult to ensure 100% compliance. To help maintain accessibility we take a number of steps.

- Problems identified by the monthly automated check are corrected.
- Recommendations made by an external accessibility specialist have been implemented.
- Any pdf added to the website or updated is made as accessible as possible.
- Some parts of the website are provided by third party systems, which are harder to manage and make changes to. This includes our planning application and building control system, councillors system and payments. We work with the companies supplying the systems, to ensure they are as accessible as the main website.
- We have started to introduce Comma Separated Values (CSV) files, alongside the pdf files. These files are mainly for developers or interested parties, who want to re-use our data. Unfortunately these files are not very accessible, which is why we also have a pdf version. More details can be found on www.tandridge.gov.uk/opendata.

We provide a lot of links to other websites and we cannot guarantee the content on these will be accessible.

7. Evaluation

How successful we are in making our website available to everyone is measured by:

- Monthly automated accessibility testing. This only shows technical compliance with standards, not how usable it is.
- Manual testing by an external accessibility specialist.
- Automated link and spellchecking testing.
- Users of the Council's website are invited to give their feedback at any time using the contact details on each page, or the forms available.

- Website survey – we follow up comments made to improve the site and respond to users.
- Website statistics to measure what pages visitors view on the site. It also shows which pages and services are being used so comparisons can be made before and after changes are introduced.
- The number of forms completed.
- Take-up of online transaction services such as payment.
- Tandridge Access Group feedback.
- SOCITM rating.

8. Contact

Anyone having problems accessing any part of the website should contact the Head of Communications, on 01883 732704, e-mail communications@tandridge.gov.uk, or fill in the *Contact us* form on the website.

Author: Giuseppina Valenza, Head of Communications, June 2014