Why This Matters Now

- The nature of "place" has changed — it's ==physical *and* digital==.

- Councils are custodians of both.

- Residents expect digital services to work as well as physical ones.

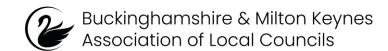*Let's explore how we shape both worlds — with purpose, clarity, and inclusion.*

Aubergine

Your Council's Website is the New Village Hall

❖ **It's open 24/7.**

❖ **It's where people come for news, advice, trust, and support.**

❖ **Just like a real hall — it must be welcoming, accessible, and easy to navigate.**

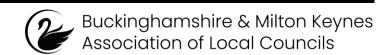*Think of your website as a digital front door to your community.*

Aubergine®

The Case for Accessibility

❖ **1 in 5 people in the UK have a disability.**

❖ **Many rely on screen readers, keyboard navigation, or assistive tech on computers and devices.**

❖ **An accessible site = a legal duty and a community service – it's the right thing to do.**

Tools & tactics:

❖ **Plain language**

❖ **Easy to navigate**

❖ **WCAG2.2AA compliance**
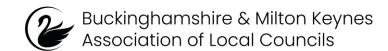
❖ **Mobile-responsive layouts**

Common Pitfalls in Council Websites - *still*

- **Not accessible *still!***

- **Buried content**

- **Poor navigation**

- **Confusing information**

- **Areas of responsibility are unclear – the 'which council does what' scenario**

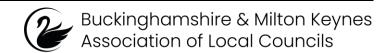**All fixable — and these improvements build trust and save you time.**

Aubergine®

Time & resource

❖ **But time is not your friend**

❖ **Workload makes you choose the immediate and loudest tasks**

❖ **Time-saving tools are what you need to better serve….**
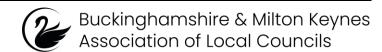
Aubergine®
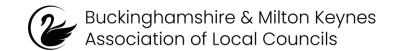
A.I. as a supporting tool...
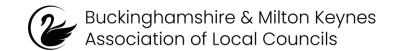
A.I. as a supporting tool...

Introducing "Helen A.I" – Your Super Clerk

- Helen AI: Smart support for busy clerks and council teams

- Search minutes & meeting documents for anything that was recorded

- Answers policy & decision questions

- Saves time with FOI & SAR request compliance

- Helps with budget planning & spend information

- Trained on .gov.uk standards with parish & town council best practices

- It's not replacing your work — it's supporting you in an already overstretched day
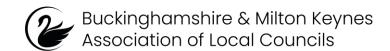
Helen A.I. – in action

❖ "Helen, when did we discuss the planning application for xxxx ."

❖ "Provide a rough summary of things we need to think about when planning the next budget based on our last 2 years of unexpected expenditure"

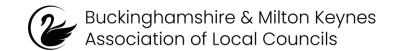❖ "How much did we spend on the playground in maintenance in the last 3 years?"

Hands-on support, always on — your assistant that'll deep dive through the filing cabinet and Windows folder for you.

Helen A.I. – in action

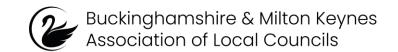- ❖ https://testing2.wcagwebsites.org/wp-admin/admin.php?page=wcag-chat

Shaping Digital Places, Supporting Real Ones

❖ **Digital Places are not a replacement — they're a complement.**

❖ **It's where most people hang out – so go there to engage and deliver.**

❖ **Strong digital tools make physical community life easier to engage with.**

❖ **Planning, event promotion, consultations = more participation, more engagement.**

Shape your place both online and offline — and bring your community closer.

Key Takeaways

- ✅ **Your website is your digital town or parish hall — make it work for everyone**

- ✅ **Accessibility isn't optional — it's essential – and helps with more engagement**

- ✅ **A.I. is here to help you do more, with less**

- ✅ **Shaping places means leading both digital and physical change**