

Report from Finance Advisory Group Chairman

Part 1: TO NOTE THAT FOLLOWING A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN HANDYMEN WEEKLY HOURS BPC PLANS TO CONTRACT OUT SOME PARTS OF THE WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE HANDYMEN.

In May 2023 the Staffing AG agreed to requests from each of the two handymen to reduce their weekly hours. This reduction totals 10.4hours pw (out of a previous total of 66.4hours pw).

In agreeing to retain these two members of staff with the requested reduction in hours the Staffing AG took account of all duties they undertake, requirements for BPC-managed waste bins to be emptied almost every week of the year, and the handymen's nationally-defined Terms of Service.

The total cash impact of that change was also calculated but is not included in this paper as that would have the effect of breaching our obligations under the Data Protection Act. However, the reduction in salary costs can be used to find a contractor to undertake priority tasks relating to village maintenance. An advertisement has therefore been prepared to seek a contractor and in the first instance the market will be tested to find companies to quote to undertake weekly collections from the almost 40 waste bins around the village. It is proposed to advertise in local newspapers (Hunts and St Neots) and by writing to companies whose business listings suggest they deal with this type of work.

BPC has already successfully contracted out some parts of our grass cutting and this has provided both resilience in our service provision and managed some of the risks that would otherwise fall on the Parish Council e.g. cutting of the splays adjacent to the A1. In addition BPC has a contract with HDC for their specialists to assess and report on work required on BPC's trees.

A draft contract has been prepared with a service specification which covers matters with which any contractor quoting would have to demonstrate they can comply. BPC will seek at least three quotes. Assessment of the applications to provide this service will be undertaken by the GP AG to secure a reliable and lawfully compliant service, including public liability insurance and an understanding of the obligations on persons dealing with the management of the waste placed in BPC's bins.

Unless and until a contractor is in place the task of emptying BPC's waste bins will continue to be undertaken by our two handymen. Their holiday and other working commitments will be managed by the Clerk to ensure that the service is provided each week.

If a suitable contractor for this aspect of BPC's work were not available other aspects of the handymen's work would then be considered for outsourcing as appropriate.

PART 2: PROPOSAL TO REVIEW AND AGREE THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR).

The Clerk will take Councillors through the detail, as required under the legal framework for the AGAR.

The AGAR documents our financial outcomes for 2021-22 compared with the previous financial year.

The Internal Auditor has already reported (see Agenda) and once agreed by Councillors and signed by BPC Chairman, as the accountable persons, the AGAR will be sent to the nationally-appointed External Auditors for their review.



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