

Briefing Note

Grasscutting Contract & Tendering

1.0 Background

In November 2016, parish councillors agreed to adopt a process for inviting tenders to carry out ground maintenance work across the parish. The process has been used on three occasions since then.

1.2 The table below shows the history of contractors bidding for work in the parish since 2016

2016	3 year contract
Specification	Grasscutting & Paths Strimming (Mine Hill & Fourgates) Hedge cutting Weed control
Number of tenders	4
Number of tenders for Grass & Paths	3

2020	3 year contract
Specification	Grasscutting & Paths Strimming (Mine Hill & Fourgates) Hedge cutting Weed control
Number of tenders	5
Number of tenders for Grass & Paths	3

2022	2 year contract
Specification	Grasscutting & Paths
Number of tenders	2
Number of tenders for Grass & Paths	2

1.3 In 2020, the bid accepted for grasscutting was £125 per cut (with approximately 16 cuts per year needed). When the period for tendering closed in January 2022, only one bid was received that quoted £424 per cut. Because of the increase in price and lack of competitive bids, councillors agreed to extend the period for tendering and re-advertise the contract. At the close of the final tendering period, council had received one additional bid for £372 per cut. This is the tender which councillors accepted from DJ Ball Solutions.

2.0 Financial background

2.1 In 2016, the parish council reviewed its method of engaging contractors who work in the parish in order to ensure best value in its procurement of services and to enable it to maintain the precept at its then level.

2.2 Tendering of goods and services (as opposed to simple purchasing) by the parish council is only necessary when the contract value is higher than £60,000. However, this council decided that in order to demonstrate working in an open, transparent and accountable way, it would invite tenders for grounds maintenance and give all potential applicants the widest opportunity to bid for the work.

2.3 The conduct of procurement is set out in the council's Financial Regulations, last reviewed in July 2022. Whilst there is no obligation to seek competitive tenders for contracts

with a lifetime value below £60,000, best practice is to obtain, *where possible*, three quotations.

Extract from Financial regulations

1.105 Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:

a. Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency *provided that this regulation need not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:*

i. for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services;

ii for specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants;

iii for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which consist of repairs to or parts for existing machinery or equipment or plant;

iv for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the council;

and

h. *When it is to enter into a contract of less than £60,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk or RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £3,000 and above £100 the Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 1.31 above shall apply.*

(My italics)

2.4 The current contractor's annual value is £5952, so giving a lifetime value over two years of £11,904.

3.0 Changing the specification

3.1 In October 2021, as part of a review of grounds maintenance, the council carried out an extensive survey with residents to examine attitudes towards grasscutting and weed control. The survey also asked residents to identify additional sites around the parish which could be included in any revised schedule of grasscutting. This link takes you to the full report: https://www.menheniotparish.org.uk/data/uploads/1396_858586482.pdf

3.2 Appendix 2 (page 10) identifies seven additional areas that residents wished to see cut and maintained. They include the proposed areas of grass at Mine Hill and Bowling Green. During their discussions to agree a final specification in April 2022, councillors agreed that they would not maintain land they did not own.

4.0 Summary

4.1 The grounds maintenance contract with DJ Ball Solutions expires at the end of March 2024. The current contractor is willing to continue for at least a further year at the current price of £372 per cut. If councillors wish to add in two extra areas for grasscutting (Mine Hill/Trelawny Road junction and the verge strip at Bowling Green) the extra cost for both areas will be an extra £25 per cut. These two areas are owned by Cornwall Council. Annual hedge trimming at Trelawny Gardens would be £225.

5.0 Options

Councillors may choose from these options:

- Retain the current contractor with the same specification for an additional period at the same cost as originally agreed
- Retain the current contractor with additional cutting/hedging for an additional period at an extra cost for the extra work.
- Review the current specification and advertise for a new contractor.

Author: John Hesketh, Responsible Financial Officer

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