


From: Eleanor Greene EleanorGreene@thedunnefamily.co.uk 
Subject: Re: ROW Cutting Issue
Date: 13 November 2020 at 16:08
To: Hambledon PC clerk@hambledon-pc.gov.uk
Cc: SBA@pkf-littlejohn.com

EG

Good afternoon Jo,

Thank you for your message.

I can see from the details provided that the council complied with the requirement to obtain quotes for the work and that the decision was taken on the principle of best value (which takes into account multiple factors as well as cost).

It is clear that in amongst the disruption caused by the global COVID pandemic, an email to HCC was missed, resulting in the council incurring expenditure which had not been budgeted for.

This is not ideal but as it is very clear that it was an error rather than any deliberate act,

I see no point in doing other than to remind the council of the following:

All tenders and contracts should be transparently recorded in the agenda documents and minutes

see page 24 here

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408386/150227_PUBLICATION_Final_LGTC_2015.pdf

All members and officers should bear in mind that the Nolan Principles apply, particularly with regard to acting as a body corporate

see page 11 here <https://www.hampshirealc.org.uk/document/Publications/Good%20Councillor%20Guide%202018.pdf>

During the pandemic, all altered Council systems should be in accordance with the guidance

here <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus>

The council members, officers and electors should appraise themselves with the current edition of the Practitioners Guide, which supports the work of internal and external auditors

see here <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/jpag/3223-practitioners-guide-2020/file>

I have copied this message to the external auditors, PKF so that if the matter is raised with them by any party, they will be aware that it will be included in my report on the 20/21 year as an advisory area for improvement but no more.

When the website of the council (<https://www.hambledon-pc.gov.uk/>) is next being updated, it may be worth including a 'current projects' section onto the home page so that all villagers can easily obtain information about how the council is spending money on their behalf.

I hope that the above is of assistance

Best regards
Eleanor

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On 13/11/2020 12:49, Hambledon PC wrote:

Hi Eleanor,

In the interests of transparency, I wanted to make you aware of a recent potential failure on behalf of the PC in obtaining best value for money. Main points follow:

- May 2020 - e-mail received from Countryside Access Team (CAT) stating that they were going to postpone the contract for priority cutting lists and invited PCs to respond with an alternative delivery. I informed them of Hambledon's interest.
- June 2020 - e-mail from CAT asking for details of costs/quotes. This did state 'to the same or similar value as had been assigned for the County's contract', but neither myself nor any councillors who I forwarded the e-mail on to, picked up on this. No time limit for a response given.
- July-Sept 2020 - Four quotes received from local businesses - £425; £1050; £1650; and £1725-2070 (no Aug meeting so it was agreed that a contractor would be appointed at the Sept meeting).
- Sept 2020 - Cllrs voted for the £1650 (and vetoed the cheapest quote thinking that it was non-compliant due to the massive cost difference).
- Oct 2020 - Work was carried out and contractor paid.
- I approached Countryside Access Team for details on how to reclaim costs, and was informed that because they hadn't received a response to their June e-mail, costs hadn't been factored into their budget. They have agreed to refund what their contractor would have charged, which apparently is only £450. This leaves us with a 'shortfall' of £1200, and begs the question of whether best value for money was actually obtained (i.e. the vetoed quote was actually in line with CAT's contractor).
- I have checked with CAT on the exact spec of the work, and it appears to be in line with what our contractor has done.

In hindsight, I should have asked for quotes to be tendered earlier so that I could double-check with CAT before the meeting, and have absolute clarity on what reimbursement the PC could expect. There were unintentional mistakes made by both myself and cllrs. Obviously,

there is little now that can be done to rectify this, but I wanted your advice on whether I need to take any further action.

Thanks in advance and b/w,

Jo

Joanna Tester (Mrs)
Clerk, Hambledon PC

clerk@hambledon-pc.gov.uk

Please note that my working hours are as follows:

Monday - 11.15am to 2.15pm

Tuesday - 9.30am to 2.15pm

Thursday - 10am to 2.15pm

A further three hours worked flexibly throughout the week.



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