



Report of Parish Clerk

Cemetery Maintenance Contract – 2025/26 Renewal

Background

The current contractor, Special Branch Tree Services won the annual contract for cemetery maintenance via a competitive exercise. The contract commenced 1st April 2019. The contract was awarded for one year plus the option for a further year extension.

The original procurement exercise attracted only 2 bids of which the winning bid was one. The winning bidder was significantly lower.

Due to the COVID19 pandemic situation and the good, reliable performance of the Contractor, Parish Council agreed to extend the contract for a further 2 years up to 31st March 2023.

Current Situation

At its meeting in November 2023 Parish Council agreed to waive financial regulations and carry out single supplier negotiation with the current provider. This led to the award of the contract for the year 2024-25 at an annual cost of £3918.22 which was a 5% increase on the previous year.

The Contractor has continued to meet the requirements of the cemetery maintenance specification to a good standard and has been consistent in performance.

The current contracting arrangements come to an end on 31st March 2025.

Financial Regulations state that 3 quotations can be sought for works between £3000 and £30000. However, they can also be waived (Financial Regulations Sec 5.13) to enable price negotiation without competition if there is a genuine justifiable reason(s) for doing so.

There are number of benefits of extending the existing contract:

- Guaranteed continuity of service
- Special Branch Tree Services, as the name suggests, is primarily a tree surgeon business. Given the nature of this work, the contractor has spare capacity over the summer months to give a firm commitment to regular grass cutting, regardless of the weather, over the summer months.
- This contractor has experience of the sensitive nature of cemetery maintenance, not only in our cemetery but with those managed by other parish councils.

- The tree surgeon expertise, with a reliable contractor, has also been of value when ad hoc work, (quoted for outside the contract), has been required not only in the cemetery but also in relation to Village Green maintenance.
- Any price increase, when the contract has been extended, has been very reasonable /justified.

Options

Parish Council has two options that it can consider:

- 1) Seek to obtain 3 quotations for the annual cemetery maintenance contract based on the existing specification and award based on an agreed criteria.
- 2) Waive Standing Orders and negotiate a new contract with the existing contractor if Parish Council considers there is justifiable reason for doing so.

Parish Council is asked to consider the two options and agree the process for the new Contract.

M Ramshaw – Parish Clerk

11/11/24