

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Operational Update

1. Background

- 1.1 For the Autumn/Winter hedge cutting season, the Parish Council relies on the use of a flail side arm on the Kubota tractor.
- 1.2 The flail head comprises spinning steel blades – similar to a chisel head. It is an efficient method for cutting back hedges at the volume and rate that is required by the Parish Council. The flail machinery is deployed by Swindon Borough Council and other Parish Councils across the Borough. It is fierce and often leaves a blunt or splintered cut.

2. Report Details

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Parish Council would benefit from the addition of a rotary hedge cutter for the side arm. This would provide a sharper cut and would leave a more finished result – more similar to a hand held hedge cutting tool.
- 2.2 The rotary hedge cutter would have a significantly reduced risk of breaking than we have encountered with the flail cutter. It may however require more clean up time as it is reportedly less efficient at chewing up the debris than the flail machine. This may have been improved by more up to date models. A model such as Bexx CHT-100R ROTARY HEDGECUTTER is proposed. Team members have used this in the past and think highly of it.



- 2.3 It would be proposed that an item similar to this is purchased and used in conjunction

with the existing flail head. The flail head would concentrate on open spaces and where a more heavy handed approach is necessary, and the rotary head would focus on residential areas. In general terms, the flail head spits out in a forwards direction, the rotary hedge cutter spits out in a downward direction. This would reduce the likelihood of broken parts or wood flying out of the machine.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Estimated costs are in the region of £7,000 – to be confirmed. Supply and delivery timeframes are unconfirmed. This will also have a cost related to installation as it will require adjustments as part of fitting to the side arm/tractor.
- 3.2 The advantage of this investment is that this still enables the Parish Council to rely on heavy mechanical practice for the majority of the annual cut. Without machinery, the work would need 4-6 additional staff to complete by hand, alongside implications of acquiring tools and hand vibration.

If costs are confirmed in the region of £7,000 this represents just under 1% of the precept expenditure budget. £20,000 was allocated in the current year's budget for mowing and grounds fleet – the purpose was to build up a capital reserve for the future purchase of replacement mowers. However this could be reallocated to this expenditure.

4. Recommendation:

- 4.1 It is the recommendation of the report that Council approves expenditure on additional hedge cutting machinery. Costs to be confirmed to Finance & Staffing Committee. Finance and Staffing Committee to be given delegated approval for expenditure up to £10,000 subject to the requisite number of quotes.

Paula Harrison
Parish Manager