

The Sampfords Parish Council

Kevin Kelson

Clerk & RFO

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Village Hall, Great Sampford,
Saffron Walden, CB10 2RL

Clerk's Report Parish Council Meeting 18th February 2025

1. Policies & Procedures

Sign off sheets have been signed by the majority of councillors, follow up with remaining councillors to avoid potential audit exceptions.

2. Internal Auditor Selection

Request for proposals have been received from three auditors that will cover Northwest Essex:

John Watson

- Associate Member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries Administrators since 1970, Practicing Accountant since 1976 and Local Authority Internal Auditor since 2015.
- Is an unknown quantity, although evidently well experienced in internal audit. Detailed proposal as to coverage of internal audit activities.
- Works totally remotely additional costs for couriering hard copy documents.
- **£160.00 per annum**

Stephanie Robinson

- Finance Controller EALC, Qualified CiLCA Clerk since April 2020, ICAEW and 10 years parish Clerk / RFO experience
- Is known for her work at the EALC and SLCC and currently an active Clerk / RFO for multiple councils, no details regarding internal audit scope. Well respected by EALC members. Cost is comparatively high.
- Works totally remotely additional costs for couriering hard copy documents.
- **£175.00 per annum**

Ann Wood

- Head of Legal and member enquiries at EALC, Certificate – Local Policy, LLB, DMS and 25 years parish Clerk / RFO experience
- Clear Internal Audit scope template, well respected by EALC members, considered the font of all knowledge, based in Dunmow, so easy access for face-to-face meetings / submitting documents.
- **£130 per annum**

Recommendation

To appoint Ann Wood based on the detailed proposal received, time availability, experience of working with her at the EALC and cost.

3. Website design and build / Web and Email Hosting

A requirements document / Request for proposal (available for review) has been prepared and submitted to potential providers. Some of which were eliminated due to lack of local council focus /

experience and for being cost prohibitive. In all cases the Website builder / hosting company work with a partner to provide separate email hosting.

Proposals have been received (available to review) from three potential partners, a cost summary of the three proposals is attached.

Force 36 Limited / Flok

Force 36 currently manage The Sampfords “.gov.uk” domain for its website / email. Force 36 was established in 2002 to provide a range of IT services including web and cloud hosting to a diverse range of clients, including some local councils. Force 36 can provide email hosting, but not website design / build.

Force 36 work with Flok to provide website design and build. Flok is based in Newmarket and Cambridge with a key focus on marketing for commercial based organisations. Flok build websites but have very limited experience with local councils / public office organisations. As can be seen from the cost analysis the combined costs of FLOK / Force 36 is the highest.

Timelines are unknown until the next steps are undertaken with FLOK.

Aubergine

Aubergine has been established for over 30 years, based in Leighton Buzzard, Aubergine has considerable experience in designing and building websites for local councils. The company has grown rapidly to the point where it now offers “out-of-the-box” solutions rather than building something specific for each council, unless the council is prepared to pay significant additional fees.

Speaking to some existing councils (Debden, Little Abington, Great Shelford), the feedback suggests that Aubergine is fine, as long as you use the out of the box solution and do not rely heavily on ongoing support. Aubergine standard references are provided by larger councils that have bespoke solutions.

Councils are expected to make their own contractual arrangements with CloudNext for email hosting. CloudNext is based in Derby and has over 4000 clients of which 600 are local councils.

Timelines are between 2-3 months.

Eyelid Productions

Eyelid productions is based in Hereford, and established itself several years ago, by parish councillors / clerks who were frustrated by suppliers not understanding local council business, so decide to build their own website and offer it to other councils at a low-cost entry point. Similar to Aubergine, Eyelid Productions has more or less built an out of the box solution, but with a much lower set up fee and ongoing fees. Eyelid productions were happy for The Sampfords to speak to any existing council without prior arrangement, of the calls made (Bardwell, Langford, Nazeing, Barton Le Clay) all of the feedback was positive, highlighting, that the website is perfect for smaller councils and easy to use / load content, support was good due to the fact that Eyelid Productions are from a council background.

Eyelid Productions also work with CloudNext for email hosting but manage the relationship. Aubergine has lost customers to Eyelid Productions due to either too many hidden costs or poor ongoing support.

Timelines are 1 month assuming no major bespoke work.

Recommendation

Based on the proposals received, research performed, contact with the providers to date, references taken and costs submitted, it is recommended to appoint Eyelid Productions / CloudNext to perform web design, web build email build and ongoing web / email support.

4. Training

Cllr Wolstenholme has requested to attend Councillor Training modules 1 to 4 during March at a cost of £200.00 +VAT

The Clerk has requested to attend the planning training module to continue the CilCa modules on 19th March at a cost of £100.00 +VAT

5. Holiday

The Clerk will be on holiday from 15th June to 6th July. Cover will be needed for the 17th June meeting. Documents will be prepared in advance, but minutes will need to be taken and circulated and any urgent payments will need to be initiated.