



## BOX PARISH COUNCIL

### **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE** **WAS HELD ON 19<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

- 1. Present:** Councillors: R. Case (Chairman); B. Walton; D. Wright  
A. Barton; R. Campbell  
Council Staff: M. Carey (Clerk); J. Arney (Open Spaces Groundsman);  
Chris Drake (Assistant Open Spaces Groundsman)
- 2. Apologies:** Cllr S. Parker
- 3. To consider the options for the replacement mowers:** Cllrs Campbell and Barton to present costings etc.

It was stated that the current five year leasehold agreement on the existing mowers had ended in March 2021. The annual lease hire had been £44400 pa + vat and the service contract had been £1013.96 pa. The cost at the present time to retain the mowers is a one off payment of £370 pa

A tentative selling price for the existing mowers had been quoted at £18500. Cllr Barton was dubious that the Council would get this much and felt that a more realistic figure would be £10k

Cllrs Campbell and Barton had looked at various machines and had drawn up options for eleven models - six diesel; three petrol and two battery. Cllr Campbell felt that there was little difference between the machines. Cllr Barton was surprised at the difference in cost between diesel and petrol with a saving of between £6-8K on the petrol models. He was not convinced that the electric machines would give the running times that had been stated.

It was stated that the current mowers are perfectly good at the present time.

Cllr Walton felt that there should be a comparison showing service and running costs for each type of machine as the service costs on the electric mowers would be less. She also felt that the impact on health needed to be considered and environmental issues. It was not just the price of the machine but how easy they were to use ie the adjustment of the blades.

Cllr Campbell replied that they were not able to get the running costs from the dealers. They all meet the noise and vibration standards but there is a considerable difference between the cost of the petrol and the electric machines. He felt that the cost of the electric mowers was too high at the present time. There were only two brands of electric mowers – the Ariens and the Mean Green Machine. Ariens have extensive dealers in the UK but there is only one dealer for the Mean Green Machine who imports the machines and they are over 200 miles away.

Cllr Walton did not feel that the cost should be the main option and Joel stated that the machines they are currently using cost £35K five years ago.

Consideration should be given to the impact on environment and health

The Groundsman confirmed that there were no issues with the existing mowers. If the Council went for a petrol machine they would have to go to the garage every time as that amount of petrol could not be stored on the Recreation Ground. The current diesel tank holds 1250L

The Groundsmen had had a demonstration of the Mean Green Machine to see if this would be viable and suitable for the requirements.

It was discussed whether this was the wrong time to look at the options and whether this exercise would be best carried out when the market widens. It was felt that there would be more dealers doing the electric machines in the next couple of years.

Cllr Wright raised the issue of the recently adopted Climate Change Action Plan which was adopted last month and whether this had primacy. If the policy is to be applied then the Council must look at the electric option or it could be seen that the Council is not applying its own policy. The whole life cost needed to be addressed ie how much can the Council afford and also the user requirement ie the staff using the machines must be happy with them.

It was stated that Council needs to embed in the ethos of the Climate Change Action Plan and not be tokenistic.

Cllr Barton stated that he was all for electric but there were only three mowers on the market at the present time. He did not feel that technology was quite there yet.

Joel stated that with an electric machine you are paying the cost of the machine and batteries up front which would be the cost of purchase, service and repair for the other models.

Chris stated that the Council was slowly changing all the other tools to electric and they were very impressed with those – less noise and less vibration. They were constantly looked at new machines and doing research and they go to the Soltex Trade Show to look at equipment. He felt that the options shown did not take into account what they already had. They would be going to this year's Show on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November at Birmingham NEC if any Councillor wished to go.

Joel said that the electric machine was of greater benefit because you could fit other options to it – there would be more flexibility and could cover the work currently carried out by other machines. The battery kit is purchased in one go so this together with the charging costs would have to be compared to the fuel and servicing costs of the other machines.

It was felt that more information was required and that user reviews on other councils with electric machines should be sought. The Council should also obtain a valuation for the existing mowers. The three things to consider were:

- How much the Council has set aside and could afford
- Value of the existing machine
- More demonstrations of the electric mowers

It was felt that there had to be a way to move forward and needed to address the pros and cons for each machine and the current costings re fuel need to be factored in.

It was felt that the Committee was not in a position to move forward at the present time. All the relevant costs involved had to be given and the machines should be compared to the existing mowers. It was agreed that we can continue with the status quo until the Committee is confident that it has all the information to present to Full Council. It was agreed to bring all the information back to a further meeting in January.

Thanks were given to Cllrs Campbell and Barton for their hard work in researching the options and to Joel and Chris for their input. It was felt that accountability to parishioners is important.

It was agreed to **recommended** to Full Council to discuss and establish if the Climate Strategy Action Plan had primacy in this.

- 4. List of winter jobs:** A spreadsheet of all the jobs from all the committees had been drawn up. The Groundsmen are aware of this and will prioritise this and look at those which are weather dependant.

The spreadsheet should be update when the work is carried out.

It was agreed to discuss the bus shelters, notice boards and grit bins at the next meeting.

- 5. Health & Safety Procedures:** The Groundsmen to go through the log book and check list with Cllr Walton.

**Chairman**