

Agenda Item 12 – Contract Procurement

Background

Some of the Council's 3-year contracts end as at the 31st December 2025. These are:

1. Jubilee Field & Orchard Way Grass and Hedge Cutting, currently contracted to Countrywide.
2. Verge cutting, partly funded by DCC under the Urban Grass Cutting Programme as the verges are DCC's responsibility, currently contracted to South West Grounds Maintenance.
3. Weed Spraying, currently contracted to Halcyon Landscapes.

It is now time to start a procurement process for these contracts.

Specifications

Accompanying this paper are the following draft specifications:

1. Jubilee Field Grass Cutting
2. Jubilee Field Hedge Management
3. Orchard Way Grass Cutting
4. Orchard Way Hedge Management
5. Verge cutting
6. Weed Spraying

Councillors are invited to consider whether any amendments are required to the draft specifications.

Procurement

The available work is split into 6 separate contracts as per the accompanying specifications. Contractors may bid for as many of these as they wish.

All of the contracts currently fall under the £30,000 threshold (including VAT) for advertising through the Government's contract portal, with only one, the Verge Cutting coming anywhere near this at an estimated 3-year contract cost of around £28,000 including VAT. Please note that the threshold only applies where a contract is openly advertised and not where the Parish Council chooses to approach potential contractors directly rather than advertise.

All of the contracts fall below the £60,000 limit in the Financial Regulations for a formal tender process and well below the Government threshold for a formal tender.

The Council may choose to stick with 3 years as the contract term or choose a shorter or longer term, however it should be noted that longer contract terms may exceed Financial Regulation or Government thresholds for advertising and formal tenders as the value is based on the entire contract term.

Jubilee Field & Orchard Way

The grass and hedge cutting are currently undertaken by one contractor, however these have been split into 4 lots and can be allocated to separate contractors, although in practice it is likely to only prove attractive as one package. In total the 3-year contract value is estimated at around £13,000 plus VAT for the 4 lots combined.

Verge Cutting

The verges are the responsibility of the County Council and DCC currently fund around 70% of the cost. With an administrative change confirmation is awaited as to whether this will continue from 2026. The Clerk has raised this within a list of items sent to new County Councillor and will be following this up over the Summer. It is therefore recommended that, to avoid delay, a procurement process is carried out, but no formal award of the contract is made until the position is confirmed. It is estimated that a 3-year contract cost will be in the region of £23,500 plus VAT

Weed Spraying

The need for weed spraying has been debated by Council previously, with some members of the public and Councillors expressing views against weed spraying for environmental reasons and others with an opposite view who consider that spraying is needed to maintain the pavements and keep the village looking tidy. Councillors therefore need to first decide whether they wish to continue with annual weed spraying. It is estimated that a 3-year contract cost will be in the region of £5,000 plus VAT.

For the past 3 years the County Councillor has approved a contribution of £700 per annum from their Locality Budget towards the weed spraying cost, but this is not guaranteed in future years.

Suggested Timescales

The following timescales are recommended for the procurement of new contracts:

1. Following the July Council meeting the specifications to be finalised before the end of August.
2. September/October – contract opportunities advertised and potential contractors contacted. A 28-day application window is recommended i.e. if advertised on the 29th September, closing date would be the 27th October.
3. Contracts awarded at the 13th November Council.
4. Formal contract award letters issued November 2025 for contracts to commence in 2026, subject to any outstanding issues i.e. confirmation of the continuance of the funding from DCC in respect of verge cutting.
5. Contracts commence January 2026. In practice first grass cuts etc... will take place from early March.

Debbie Bird

Clerk to Willand Parish Council

July 2025