

## **LAVERSTOCK & FORD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Report for FGP Agenda Item 22.053 Accounting System**

**Subject:** Purchase of New Accounting Software and Support

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022

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#### **1. Report Summary.**

- 1.1 This report explains the reasons why the RFO is recommending that the Council purchase a new accounting system to replace Rialtas Business Services and excel based spreadsheets.

#### **2. Background.**

- 2.1 The Internal Auditor's report for the FY 2019-2020 stated that the Council should implement a new accounting system to enable Accounting Statements to be based on Income and Expenditure including corrections for Debtors and Creditors. The Internal Auditor recommended several systems including Rialtas Business Solutions. Rialtas was purchased by the Council in 2021 and used to produce the 2021-2022 Accounting Statements.
- 2.2 There have been many problems with the Rialtas system. These are just examples.
- 2.2.1 Training was poor. One full day online with no backup manuals or written instructions.
- 2.2.2 Support is not satisfactory. There is no telephone support. Support is requested by email and there is a delay before any response.
- 2.2.3 The system is Windows based which required the purchase of a new laptop for the RFO. A request to implement a cloud-based system for 2022-2023 has not been carried out.
- 2.2.4 Bank reconciliations do not include savings accounts. The closing of accounts at the end of each month made retrospective corrections difficult. The system started with errors due to the initial set-up and these have never been corrected. Year end assistance is required and is expensive.
- 2.3 In the process of attempting to sort out these problems the Clerk and RFO were informed that Rialtas Business Systems has been sold to Harris Computer Corporation. The original designers and directors of Rialtas are stepping down and remaining as consultants only.

#### **3. An Alternative System.**

- 3.1 It is acknowledged that Rialtas did provide sufficient information for the 2021-2022 Accounting Statement to the satisfaction of the Internal Auditor. He did however mention two other systems. Scribe and Edge. He described Scribe as being much improved in recent years. He is not keen on AvantEdge, and neither am I from a brief recent view. Edge is only used by 300 Councils.

## Report FGP.22.053 New Accounting Software

- 3.2 Scribe is a web-based system that is accessible from any device including Macs and iPads. The RFO, who is a Mac user, is particularly keen on this feature. Scribe can have an unlimited number of users with controlled access and read-only features. Support is uncapped and is available via phone or email. Year-end assistance is free.
- 3.2 I have received a one-hour demonstration of Scribe Accounts and am content that it is much easier to implement and more flexible than Rialtas. A short 5-minute video of the software is available [here](#).
- 3.3 The purchase price of Scribe Accounts is £1,497. This includes the software, initial set-up and one year's support. The Business Support budget is already £1,135 over budget and so this purchase will come from General Reserve. General Reserve on 31 March 2022 was £98k and it is being topped up monthly by increased interest payments.
- 3.4 The alternative to purchasing now would be to wait until April 2023 but this would mean producing the end-of-year Accounting Statement manually. I know from experience that this is difficult and time consuming and might incur extra fees from our internal auditor.

## **4. Recommendation.**

- 4.1 That the Finance and General Purposes Committee recommends to Full Council that the Council purchase Scribe Accounting software now for implementation for the 2022-2023 financial year.