



## **INFORMAL MEETING**

### **BUDGET ASPIRATIONS - RANGER POST DISCUSSION**

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 at 10.30am**

Present: Cllr S. Wastell (SW), Cllr S. Jones (SJ) and Cllr B. Marple (BM)

Officers: Z. Dean (ZD), A. Duncan (AD), T. Godfrey (TG).

1. The Locum Chief Officer welcomed participants to the meeting.
2. No apologies were received for the meeting.
3. TG provided a financial breakdown of the proposed salary which currently stands at SCP5, following the staffing review. The Finance Manager had allowed for a 6% increase, based on the 2023 Pay Award figures. The salary averages at £18,000 per annum.
4. The costs of a new vehicle and associated running costs had also been considered, along with the need for increased PPE, equipment, etc. Members noted that some equipment could be hired in. Branded trailers on 3 wheels could also be considered which would be useful for smaller and hard to reach locations. £12,000 would need to be set aside for initial purchase and set up of a second-hand vehicle. Those present noted that business-lease hire of a vehicle could prove to be expensive purchase. Insurance, vehicle tax, MOT and business insurance would also increase these costs.
5. The Community & Environment Committee had been delegated the task to define the role of the 'Ranger' and select objectives. Neston Town Council needs to consider what the role needs to achieve and what difference would be achieved through its creation. This forms part of the committee's objectives for 2024, however, time is needed to complete the work in order to present this as a viable position for 2025/26. If this was to be pursued prior to the proposed timeframe then other projects would have to be put on hold to achieve this if the Council so wishes.

Members concurred that it was better to go into this with open eyes. It was noted that there had been pressure to bring the role forward for PR purposes.

It was highlighted that if the role is to be sustainable then the finance would need to be underpinned going forward for the next 3-5 years in line with the Council's strategy. It is hoped that the Ranger role would eventually take on the hanging baskets within the town, which is

currently within a contract. The role could also help achieve improved management of the greening contract.

6. Members agreed that this role needed to avoid being image over substance. Even though it might not be the right thing at the current moment; planning and research is being undertaken to create and achieve a viable and sustainable role for the town. This is in line with the Council's 5-year plan. The time in between will be used to look for funding sources and possible grant funding, especially if the role could be established as 'Green' or environmentally friendly.

Taking into account all of the areas discussed above, the minimum costs to establish the Ranger role will be in excess of £30,000, potentially rising to £40,000.

**Closing points:**

**It was agreed that Community & Environment Committee will continue with the work already started as part of the objectives.**

**Information contained within this report will contribute towards the Town Council's precept announcement press release in January.**