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**Report author:** Adil Iftakhar – Clerk

**Report to** Full Council

**Date:** 24/04/2024

**Decision Required:** Yes

**Subject:** Outsourced Accounting – DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd

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Does the report contain information which has been identified as confidential?

Yes  No

If yes, please specify the reason that the report is confidential below:

N/A

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### **1 Purpose of this report**

1.1 To appoint DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd of Unit 1, Uffcot Farm, Uffcot, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN4 9NB to undertake outsourced accounting services.

### **2 Recommendation/s**

2.1 Parish Council is asked to approve the use of DCK Accounting Solutions to provide outsourced accounting services and delegate authority to the Clerk to sign the letter of engagement.

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### **3 Summary of key points**

3.1 The Parish Council continues to face a period of low-level precept charge, being the lowest in Berkshire and over the next few years will need to identify savings and efficiencies in order to sustain a balanced budget over the years to come.

3.2 For many parish councils with limited budgets for staffing and 'back office' support, it often makes sense to outsource certain routine aspects of finance and administration to a provider which can deliver an efficient service to the Council based on best practice. This means that council staff can concentrate on service

provision to meet community needs, in the knowledge that these aspects of council administration are being carried out effectively, economically, and to best practice standards.

3.3 The previous Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) left the council back in December 2023 and since then the role has been undertaken by the Clerk, with some assistance from the previous RFO on an ad hoc basis. As Responsible Finance Officer, the clerk is responsible for maintaining proper accounting records and preparing, subject to audit, financial statements complying with the relevant accounting rules and regulations. By outsourcing the service, it would mean the Clerk would be able to undertake RFO duties without being overstretched.

3.4 DCK Accounting will provide assistance in accordance with their letter of engagement and carry out the following scope of work:

- 1.To process our accounting records as submitted by us and thereby completing the accounting records, making any necessary entries and adjustments as required and prepare reports in time for our meetings.
- 2.Carry out a pre-year-end accounting 'health check' and end of year closedown.
- 3.Prepare all supporting audit trails and schedules sufficient to meet the requirements of the council's auditors.
- 4.Assist with establishing and monitoring the operation of internal control procedures.
- 5.Prepare for submission at regular intervals your VAT returns to HM Revenue & Customs.
- 6.Produce regular financial reports for the council and committees, including income and expenditure reports.

In addition, the Parish Council may instruct DCK Accounting to undertake additional optional services such as budget setting and preparing end of year accounts. Further information on DCK Accounting can be found at

<https://www.dckaccountingsolutions.co.uk/index.html>

## **4 Financial Implications and Budget Provisions**

4.1 One off cost to acquire and set up Rialtas Alpha (software) accounting package of £570 and an annual cost of £192 per annum for software maintenance. This new software would mean no longer using Scribe which costs £673.92 a year as it goes against the fundamental principles of double entry book-keeping.

4.2 In accordance with the letter of engagement, the initial fee for the work is £300 per month, however, there may be extra work required in the first six months to transfer over from Scribe. It is expected the total cost for the accounting service will be in the region of £4,362+ VAT in 2024/25 financial year.

## **5 Policy Implications**

5.1 None arising for this report.

## **6 Background Papers**

6.1 None.

Further Information

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