Anston Parish Council Annual Meeting – 20ᵗʰ May 2019

Agenda Item 14 – Parish Council Website

Briefing Paper

Background

At its meeting on 18ᵗʰ March 2019 the Parish Council agreed to obtain a new website for the Council. The current one being considered to be no longer fit for purpose. A working group comprised of Cllrs Jonathan Ireland, Clive Jepson, Glyn Prendergast and supported by the Clerk was created to examine options for a new website and to bring a proposal for a new one back to a meeting of the full Council.

Since then the working group has contacted three established companies who specialise in providing websites and IT support to parish and town councils. 2Commune, Vision ICT and E-Mango. All three companies were invited to provide a quote for a new website and give a presentation to the working group. All three companies provided quotes but only 2Commune were able to give a presentation to the group.

2Commune

Ray Smith and Tina Britt from 2Commune (based in Leicestershire) visited the Parish Council office on 25ᵗʰ April and met with the working group (apart from one councillor who was unable to attend). They explained the different types of website they provide (classic, modern and a new fully responsive design currently under development) and the advantages of their products including:

- The intuitive content management system
- The document management system with private and public documents
- the A to Z services system (linked to the national .gov.uk set up) which would direct people visiting to the relevant part of the Rotherham Council website if a particular service is provided by the principal authority
- Full social media integration
- The websites are optimised for use on mobiles and tablets

Year One costs for the 2Commune site would be

- Website set up and training - £650 + VAT
- Transfer, host and manage domain name (renewable every two years) - £150 + VAT
- Website hosting, support and annual licence - £400 + VAT
- 'Modern' template design - £250 + VAT
- Social Media integration (optional) - £150 + VAT

Total - £1,650 + VAT

Year Two costs for the 2Commune site would be:

- Website hosting, support and annual licence - **£400 + VAT**

Examples of 2Commune websites are as follows:

- https://www.whitbytowncouncil.gov.uk/ (modern design)
- https://www.ledshamparishcouncil.gov.uk/ (classic design)
- https://www.oldbolsovertowncouncil.gov.uk/ (modern design)
- https://www.desfordparishcouncil.co.uk/ (classic design)
- https://www.raunds-tc.gov.uk/ (modern design)

In addition the new fully responsive design under development can be viewed at:

- http://beta.2commune.com/

2Commune are willing to give the Parish Council a substantial discount (i.e. to charge us the same price as for a modern design) to work with us to be the first local council to use the new fully responsive design.

I would add that as the Clerk to Ledsham Parish Council which uses a 2Commune website my opinion is that they provide a good product at a reasonable cost, the site is easy to navigate and maintain and their customer support is good.

Vision ICT

Vision ICT (based in Exeter) are another established provider of websites to parish and town councils and some examples of their products can be found below:

- http://www.wetherby.co.uk/
- http://www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk/
- http://www.nelsontowncouncil.gov.uk/

Vision ICT also provide the website for the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations (YLCA) for whom I previously worked before coming to Anston Parish Council.

Having experience of both 2Commune and Vision ICT websites either would suffice for Anston Parish Council but my opinion would be that the 2Commune product is superior. Vision ICT do not provide the A to Z services system and I believe their document system is more basic.

The first year costs for a Vision ICT would be **£1,450 + VAT** followed in year two and beyond by an annual fee of **£275 + VAT**.

E-Mango

E-Mango (based in Bournemouth) also provide websites for parish and town council and links to some examples can be found below. However unlike 2Commune and Vision ICT I do not have any practical experience of using their products or their customer support.

- http://www.burntwood-tc.gov.uk/
- http://www.northandmiddlelittleton-pc.gov.uk/
- https://www.portishead.gov.uk/

The first year costs of having an E-Mango site would be **£905 + VAT** followed in year two by an annual fee of **£480 + VAT**. However those prices would be dependent on us signing a three year contract with the company. Their quote was probably less clear than the others about what they would and would be providing. Their product also does not provide the A to Z services system.

Summary

A website provided by any of the three companies would probably be satisfactory for the Parish Council and represent a clear improvement on the current website.

However the 2Commune product is in my opinion the superior product bringing with it more functionality and whilst the headline cost of it would be higher than the other two options I believe it represents good value for money and the Council would have a market leading website as a result. I also have practical experience of using a 2Commune website and of their customer support and my experience of both has been positive.

At least two of the three members of the working group are of the view that we should purchase a responsive design website from 2Commune.

Recommendation from Working Group

- That the Parish Council purchase a 'responsive design' website from 2Commune

Chris Pilkington
Clerk to Anston Parish Council
17th May 2019