

Virtual Telephone Number

Recommendation

It is proposed that the Mobile Phone be removed from the Parish Clerks Electronic Equipment Package and that the Virtual Number replaces it.

Reasoning

Councillors are referred back to the meeting of 12th November 2019 Item 13, where it was agreed that a package of Electronic Equipment was obtained for the Parish Clerks, as part of the package a Mobile Phone be paid for. This was done but from the first day it was beset with issues, such as where the Clerk lived had no mobile signal, the messages were not correctly recorded, and calls were not always correctly diverted.

Currently this package costs the Parish £10.00 plus per month.

In March, as part of the Coronavirus recommended actions by PHE, we obtained a 'Virtual Phone Number' through Buzz Networks Limited trading as Virtual Landlines. [<https://www.virtuallandline.co.uk/>]

This number was obtained as it allowed both time of day routing and up to five different routings could be made, this allowed for a single point of contact which would be routed to the duty councillor to deal with the incoming calls.

This worked well, with only a couple of set up hic-cups in the first couple of days

The Package consisted of:

Basic Plan	£5.95 per month (unlimited incoming calls)
Office Pack	£3.00 per month (Routing, Call Whisper ¹ and Simultaneous Ringing ²)
Total	£8.95 per month

¹ This announced to whoever answered the phone that it was a call from the virtual number, thus allowing the call to be routed to a fixed or mobile number that the person already owned.

² Allowed the number to either call multiple numbers simultaneously or to cascade down to other numbers if the first number was busy or didn't answer

It was agreed that at the time this was the best solution and the most cost-effective solution, it has also proved very popular with both other organisations, members of the public and the authorities.

The 'Virtual Number' has proved a resounding success, that it is now felt that this option should replace the current mobile package that is used by the Parish Clerk.

- It allows a permanent number for the Parish, one that can endure for years.
- It gives a single remember number for all.
- It allows for the number to be diverted to whichever number the Parish Clerk so wishes.
- It removes the number not obtainable, number out of reach, or no signal issues.
- It is more cost effective than the mobile phone.

Therefore, it is proposed that the current number 01249 561020 be retained and moved to the following package

UK Unlimited	£7.95 per month (Unlimited incoming and outgoing calls ³)
Whisper Tone	£1.00 per month (Announces call from the VN number)
Total	£8.95 per month

Financial Implications

None

This is not a change of policy, or an additional expense, this is where we are substituting one communication method with another, it has already been fully costed and allowed for, it has no cost implications, it has no effect on the future financial planning of the council.

³ Outgoing is an inclusive credit to the account equivalent to either 3,600 minutes/month of UK 01/02/03 landline calls OR 1,000 UK mobile minutes/month.

Currently both packages are being paid for out of individual expenses and then reclaimed. This method of payment will remain in place until the Parish Council is able to set up standing orders for these payments.

Proposal in accordance with Standing Order 9

It is, therefore, proposed that the Mobile Phone be removed from the Parish Clerks Electronic Equipment Package and that the Virtual Number replaces it.