

HOOE PARISH COUNCIL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Financial Spend on Professional Services

Hooe Parish council has a statutory duty to manage its land, buildings, leases and rent agreements in accordance with the law. All such legal agreements are confidential and are managed in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and are considered commercially sensitive.

In 2022 the Parish Council ordered a review of all its land arrangements and many serious issues were uncovered. This review confirmed that previous Parish Councils over many years had failed to discharge its duties in accordance with the law, which resulted in the Parish Council instructing solicitors and a contract land agent to protect the Parish Councils assets to bring them back on to a legal footing.

The total spend on professional services over the last two financial years equates to £23,827 based on the known costs up to 31st March 2024. The funds allocated above the budget set for each financial year have been taken from the reserves and the bulk of the work required has been substantially completed.

The professional advice given to the Parish Council stated that if the Parish Council failed to act, and not rectify the legal standing of the Parish Council's assets, it would be deemed to be acting unlawfully, and the Parish Council could be held to account for its failure to act.

The Parish Council assets are now back on a legal footing and the Parish Council will be putting in place an Asset Management Policy as recommended by the auditor to prevent this situation arising again.

The Parish Council understands that some residents may find this news somewhat concerning, but the Parish Council had no choice but to act in its capacity as a corporate body, the Parish Council, who are accountable to the Government auditors and its electorate to operate in accordance with the laws governing Councils.

On behalf of Hooe Parish Council

April 2024