

Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council

REPORT ON THE SUITABILITY OF EMPLOYING OR CONTRACTING TOWN RANGERS:

Introduction:

Up and down the country, Parish and Town Councils are taking on devolved services from District and County councils to benefit the local community and combat negligence. Many of these services require consistent maintenance and repairs which are currently not being performed frequently and efficiently due to budgetary constraints. As Parish and Town Councils are the closest tier of government to the public: it may be easier for residents to report issues to them and have them be resolved in an efficient manner.

This report explores the cost implications of employing Town Rangers, as well as some suitable options for discussion.

I. What could Town Rangers be employed to do?

Town Rangers can work flexibly on a wide range of projects to suit the Council's needs. However, the Council may decide not all of these tasks need to be implemented as soon as possible, if at all. These potential jobs and projects include, but are not limited to:

CLEANING:

- The cleaning of road signs and noticeboards.
- The cleaning of bus shelters.
- Litter picking.
- Pressure washing surfaces and assets.
- The cleaning of public walkways.
- The cleaning of town benches and other public seating.

CLEARING:

- The clearing of graffiti.
- The clearing of leaves, grass cuttings and general debris.
- The clearing of some fly-tipping.
- The clearing of animal fouling.
- The clearing of hazardous objects such as glass.

MAINTENANCE:

- The maintenance of town benches.
- Allotment upkeep.
- General site and asset inspections.
- The maintenance of bus shelters.
- The maintenance of noticeboards.
- The maintenance of roads and repair of some potholes.
- The installation and maintenance of public bins.
- Painting and sanding.

PRESENTATION:

- The installation and maintenance of planting projects and hanging baskets.
- The trimming of overgrown walkways and hedges.
- The mowing of grassy areas.
- The planting and maintenance of flowerbeds.

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2. What equipment would the Town Rangers need:

Various tools and PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) are vital for the role of a Town Ranger. These tools will vary in price, size and importance but need to be considered. It is also important to consider where this equipment is stored to ensure it is not accessible to the public but is kept in a protective environment that the Town Rangers can access on a full-time basis. The Town Council may decide that not all of this equipment is necessary, depending on which jobs the Town Rangers are required to carry out.

Some examples of equipment include, but are not limited to:

MOTOR/ VEHICULAR EQUIPMENT:

- Cars/ trucks or vans.
- A tractor.
- Lawnmowers.
- A rotavator.

LARGE/ POWERED TOOLS:

- Pressure washers.
- Leaf blowers.
- Edge trimmers.
- Electric saws.
- Litter vacuums.
- A sanding machine.
- Drills.

GARDEN BASED TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT:

- Weed killing chemicals.
- Wheelbarrows.
- Anvil pruners.
- Watering cans.
- Shovels.
- Shears.
- Rakes.

OTHER TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT:

- Buckets.
- Sponges.
- Paints and primers.
- Litter grabbers.
- Grit.
- Bin bags.
- First aid kits.
- Accident books.
- A phone or computer.
- Sharps disposal bin/ container.
- Tape measures.
- Hammers.

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- Screwdrivers.
- Wrenches/ spanners.
- Graffiti remover.
- Various cloth and fabrics.
- Torches.

PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT:

- Goggles.
- Disposable face masks.
- Respiratory masks.
- Latex gloves.
- Gardening gloves.
- Hats.
- Protective boots.
- High visibility suits/ jackets.
- Ear defenders.
- Hard hats.
- Waterproof clothing.

**There is also an opportunity to introduce uniform: whether it be a polo shirt with a logo, or an entire set of clothing.*

PROS OF UNIFORM:	CONS OF UNIFORM:
Uniform reinforces the Town Council's identity and shows the community that The Council is acting on requests.	The potential for poor performance of employees reflects negatively on the Town Council's reputation.
The Town Rangers look presentable when representing the Town Council in public.	Uniform is a cost to the taxpayer.

STORAGE OPTIONS:

- Purchasing a depot or large shed.
- Storing equipment in the Town Council Hub.
- Hiring a storage area.

3. Cost implications and hiring considerations to note:

There are pros and cons associated with hiring Town Rangers. Some of these pros and cons are dependent on the number of Town Rangers you wish to recruit.

The average salary for a full-time Town Ranger is £22,183.

Smaller Parish and Town Councils may only hire one full-time Town Ranger to manage directly.

PROS:	CONS:
This is significantly cheaper than hiring a team.	There are serious risks with lone working, especially outdoors.
The council will need to purchase less equipment.	Having one Town Ranger means less work can be completed.

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One member of staff will be more efficient to manage and will consume less officer time.	Sickness and annual leave will not be covered and will have serious effects on workflow.
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Larger Parish and Town Councils may hire a team of up to twelve Town Rangers.

PROS:	CONS:
A larger team will be able to complete multiple tasks at once.	A large team needs significant management, which is time consuming for officers.
There are no lone working risks.	A large team is a significant cost to the taxpayer.
Sickness and annual leave are easily managed and covered.	More equipment and risk assessing will be necessary for each individual ranger.

Some Parish and Town Councils operate a team of around seven or eight Town Rangers. The pros and cons are similar to operating a large team. Others operate similarly, but with one or two full-time employees and a further few part-time employees.

4. The potential to use The Pelham Community Hub's Building Enterprise:

The Pelham Community Hub is a local charity which operates the Building Enterprise: a construction, building and maintenance enterprise providing employment opportunities for local young people. It uses on-the-job training to help employees gain experience and confidence under the support and guidance of a team of builders and supervisors. The Building Enterprise delivers a multitude of projects locally, including:

- Site clearance.
- Painting.
- Decorating.
- Carpentry.
- Repointing.
- General building work.

They also work on the Preston Road and Sidley House allotments which are owned and managed by the Town Council. Allotment upkeep is a task that most Parish and Town Councils expect from their Town Rangers.

5. Why The Building Enterprise is a good direction for the Town Council to go in:

- The Pelham Community Hub and Town Council have established a strong working relationship, with The Pelham delivering a number of tasks for the Town Council over the past three years.
- As a local charity, The Pelham may benefit from any funding and public support given by The Council.
- The Building Enterprise has proven to be affordable and reliable with its previous projects.

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- It may be more cost effective for the Town Council to contract Town Ranger work to The Pelham than to employ its own full-time Town Rangers.
 - The Pelham may be eligible for external support and funding.
 - Without needing to directly manage individual Town Rangers: the Town Council inevitably saves money and officer time.
 - The Pelham may have its own insurance.
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6. Other information to note:

- The Building Enterprise frequently changes its members. This means, at certain points, The Pelham may feel unable to do larger jobs as new employees adapt to their working environment.
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7. Necessary Town Ranger training and information:

There are several risks to employing Town Rangers that need to be taken into consideration. To protect the Town Council's employees and members of the public: it is vital that the Town Rangers are fully trained in the following areas:

- First Aid training.
 - Training on the safe handling of chemicals and sharp objects.
 - Training on manual labour and heavy lifting.
 - Training to use dangerous equipment such as power tools.
 - General Health and Safety training.
 - General training on working around members of the public.
 - Desirable: A full, clean driving license.
 - Desirable: A qualification in landscaping or horticulture.
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8. Other benefits of recruiting Town Rangers:

As well as clearing up Bexhill-on-Sea and improving its accessibility: there are other benefits to employing Town Rangers.

Having employees out and about in the town shows that the Town Council is listening to residents and working hard to improve any issues they may have. This greatly improves public perception of the Town Council. For example: taking before and after pictures of any work completed by the Town Rangers, as well as logging response times could show how beneficial the Town Rangers are to the town. This could even be made into a regular spread in publications such as the Bexhill News, or improve public engagement on social media. Employing local young people provides employees with brilliant work experience and a secure working environment that they can take pride in. Using young people for jobs around the town expands the Town Council's reach to a whole new demographic.

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Another benefit is being able to further support local community groups. Many Town Councils allow local community groups to hire the support of Town Rangers for things such as community litter picks. This ultimately strengthens relationships between The Council and other community organizations.

9. Financial Projection

Significant capital investment would be required, costings could be in excess of £250,000 to set up.

Staffing costs will depend on the number of Rangers recruited. A reasonable team of 7-8 Rangers would cost approximately £250,000.

With total initial costs being in the region of £500,000, the Town Council could collect Special Expenses through the devolution of Parks and Open Spaces from Rother District Council and raise approximately £600,000.

Capital grants could be sought from the Town Board.

10. Conclusion:

Investigating and employing Town Rangers is a substantial undertaking that will require significant time and resources. This process is not without risks, including potential budget overruns and implementation challenges. However, the success of similar programs by Parish and Town Councils across the country demonstrates the effectiveness of this initiative. Town Rangers have been shown to significantly enhance engagement between the Council and the public, fostering a sense of community and improving public services. Thus, despite the challenges, the potential benefits make it a worthwhile consideration for improving Council-public interaction.

The delivery of services using The Pelham Building Enterprise provides employment for young residents, saving the Town Council significant resourcing and management tasks and offers numerous other benefits. Social value employers often see increased innovation as diverse, motivated teams work towards common social goals. Additionally, they can benefit from government incentives and partnerships, further driving their mission. Ultimately, being a social value employer not only contributes to societal well-being but also enhances business sustainability and profitability through responsible and impactful operations and reduces the impact on the Town Council resources.
