

Lockwood Parish Council

Notes on the Advantages of Employing a Parish/Village Caretaker

Since 1984 we have had various experiences in employing a caretaker and in spite of some problems I think that most of my councillors would still hire one. At the moment we have a contractor who is very good but he does not have the same relationship with our parishioners as our caretaker did. I am hopeful that the Parish Council will consider employing a caretaker in the near future.

Before hiring somebody you must decide how great your need is for a worker and if there enough work for him to do all year round, there are always jobs to do when it is dry but what will be done when it snows or rains. What exactly do you want him to do? While wanting someone to react to jobs which need doing in an emergency you have to have some basic needs – it is no use saying you want to keep the village ‘tidy’.

The question is how do you keep it tidy – you need a rolling programme of work laid down on paper. A work programme protects you and your worker – you will not always be around to see what he has done and he will with his written list know exactly what you want from him.

We started our search for a new caretaker by having a wish list as below.

How much an hour can we afford to pay him – we paid £7.00 per hour and after 6 months £7.50 per hour – our worker was on family tax credits so he was happy with this – we also interviewed 3 men who had either taken early retirement or been made redundant – all would have been happy to take the wage offered.

What skills do we need him to have and are we prepared to train him – so build this into the cost of employing him.

We have isolated areas so we need a man who can drive – can we afford a hire vehicle or do we pay him a mileage allowance (we had a trailer so we built in the cost of a tow bar). You may have to consider a trailer, pay an essential users allowance and car insurance.

For those of you who have never employed anyone do not forget the cost of Employers Liability Insurance.

Does he need providing with a mobile phone?

How do we pay his wage (if you are a village group employing him have you someone who can pay the wages) – do not forget that you have to pay employers National Insurance.

Also do not forget that your worker needs some type of 'base' – depending on what you want him to do he will certainly need some tools and you will need to provide a secure lockup (don't forget tools on the insurance) not only for the tools but for the fuel for the strimmer and grass cutter.

Another thing to consider is providing your worker with Health and Safety and Risk Assessment training and obtaining an accident book (you have to have one by law).

Don't forget to provide a first aid kit.

A Parish Caretaker working with a Parish Council or village group is an asset to any community. We have (when our system was working) received many compliments. The majority of people take huge pride in where they live and such simple things as grass cutting, hedge trimming and litter picking are actually some of the things which make them happiest.

If your worker can also manage some flower planting and jobs in the village hall that is a bonus.

In Lockwood Parish we have installed notice boards, 10 seats, revamped some of our allotment sites and done our regular jobs of clearing paths, cutting hedges, keeping vermin down, replacing fencing etc. We do so well clearing old allotment scrap iron that we sell it. Last year we made over £200.

When our caretaker system worked well it enhanced our parish and also brought us to the notice of people who know nothing about the Parish Council and what it was responsible for.

There is nothing better for a Parish Council or village group when residents can point out the work done to keep the village tidy.

Pat Parry

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