

Appendix E

Proposal to change Financial Accounting Package – 23 February 2021

There are three sector specific accounting packages used widely by Parish Councils as they have been specifically designed to work with the accounting regulations affecting the sector. These are RBS Software Solutions (currently used by Stirchley Brookside Parish Council), Scribe Accounts and Edge.

RBS Omega has been used by SBPC for many years and Councillors will be familiar with its style and reports however there are particular issues with the use of this system, particularly during the current lockdown as the package is desktop based. This means that only the computer(s) with the licenced software installed can be used to input data and reports cannot be easily exported.

There is also a change in the data laws due to be introduced in the near future which requires all cloud data to be UK based. RBS uses the Cyntrix Network to enable sharing across two linked computers (if in the same building) but it is based in the United States so may become unlawful in the next few months.

Scribe is an entirely cloud based accounting system which means licensed users can access the accounts package from any location. The current RFO is familiar with the Scribe package and can confirm that the level of training and remote support is excellent. All training and support is included in the license fee which is renewable annually.

The license now covers unlimited users and permission levels may be set locally to enable view only accounts for members or auditors.

The Scribe package differs from RBS Omega in two key areas. Where Omega runs as an Income and Expenditure system throughout the year, Scribe operates on a Receipts and Payments basis and converts to I & E at year end.

Secondly, RBS uses journals to reallocate bulk payments (such as salaries) across multiple cost centres. At present this has to be done manually in Scribe, however they are willing to consider developing a similar feature as larger councils are increasingly using Scribe.

Cost Comparison

Scribe Annual License (unlimited users)	£648
Initial Set up (one off fee)	<u>£397</u>
	£1,045

RBS Omega license currently costs £

This includes access for one additional user but no remote access for members.

The recently appointed RFO had no familiarity with the RBS system and this has resulted in a steep learning curve which is ongoing. RBS Training has an additional cost:

1-2-1 Remote training session £200

The Council has for many years employed DCK Accounting to provide a year-end health check. This will be undertaken remotely in 2021 and is estimated to cost £300. This service would be included for free with the Scribe license.

The RFO has no experience with the Edge Accounting package so can make no recommendations as to its benefits.

It is recommended that the Council authorises a switch to the Scribe Accounts package at the start of the new financial year in April. This would require prior set up of the accounts to ensure a smooth transition and possibly some training for the accounts assistant and any members who wish to have access. Scribe would be able to provide access to the system within a week of approval by the Council.

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Responsible Finance Officer