

Fwd: The Council's contractor

clerk@bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk | 09:13 | 2 minute(s) read

Dear Councillors,

Please see the email below from a member of the public. I will be taking this up with the Lengthman immediately.

Kind regards

David Richards

Clerk/ RFO

Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone Parish Council

Phone: 07774 541060

===== Forwarded message =====

From:

To: <clerk@bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Date: Thu, 16 Jul 2026 15:36:26 +0100

Subject: The Council's contractor

===== Forwarded message =====

This morning, 16th July, I observed the Parish Council's contractor, referred to in agendas and minutes as 'The Lengthsman', mowing and strimming grass alongside the A358. I include the photo for your information.

On observing this I have serious concerns about the management and oversight of the contractor's work. Can the Parish Council please answer the following points?

The mower used for the work this morning might be suitable for use in a domestic setting but not for a commercial operation. With the proper equipment the job could have been done in a fraction of the time it took the contractor to walk up and down cutting narrow strips. Given the Council pays the contractor by the hour there is no incentive to invest in suitable machinery for the task or to work more efficiently. Can the Council evidence efforts to secure best value for residents?

As I understand it, Somerset Council has a statutory obligation to maintain these areas. Why are residents being asked to pay for the work through the parish precept and in such an obviously inefficient and costly manner? The hot and dry weather has resulted in a lack of vegetative growth and so the necessity for the work this morning is questionable.

I saw no signs in place warning motorists and pedestrians that grass cutting and verge strimming were in progress. This is required to alert users of the highway to the presence of operatives and potential flying debris.

The operative was not wearing standard PPE and was wearing insufficient hi-vis. Note that hi-vis should be replaced when it is worn out and faded and worn correctly even if it is hot.

To legally and safely mow and strim along a highway like the A358, the operative must hold accredited machinery operator certificates, a highway safety qualification, and work in compliance with strict traffic management standards.

From what I witnessed this morning I conclude that if any training has been undertaken it is being ignored and the operative is not being supervised. This threatens not only the safety of the operative but also drivers and other users of the highway.

You will be aware that the Parish Council has a statutory duty of care to anyone affected by its activities, including operatives employed by its contractors.

I would be grateful if you would detail what evidence the Parish Council has seen and/or requested from the contractor to satisfy itself that the appropriate training, permissions and licenses are in place for operatives undertaking this work, that these are up to date, and that the work is adequately supervised.

I look forward to the Council's response.

Kind regards