

22nd February 2024
Anita Emery - RFO

Proposal: To move from HSBC to Unity Trust Bank and open a current account, instant access savings account (2.77% interest AER) and charitable account for Drewetts Field (Drewetts already approved by Council).

Reason: HSBC do not have dual authorisation on payments. While Council sees the bank statements on a monthly basis single authorisation is not good practice and is putting the RFO under unnecessary scrutiny. HSBC do not offer dual authorisation. On trying to change signatures on the account HSBC are refusing to speak to RFO as not classed as primary account holder, primary account holder is sadly deceased. In order to remove and add signatures is impossible and you are on hold waiting to speak to a human for more than 40 minutes (I then give up). This limits the RFO to make changes as and when is required.

Unity Bank is a town and parish council orientated bank, they are easy to get hold of, changes can be made easily via their online forms. A credit card can be taken out in the Councils name which will elevate Cllrs and staff to use their own credit cards.

Whilst fees etc between the two banks (see attached excel spreadsheet) are comparable to each other the main difference is the level of authorisation for payments.

Extract from Unity Trust website: <https://www.unity.co.uk/>

“Banking for Local Councils

Hundreds of parish, community and town councils choose to work with Unity because of our shared social values, our belief in developing local UK communities, our high level of financial expertise and specialist sector knowledge.

We work closely with all our customers and tailor our products and services to suit their needs. Through customer feedback we have made developments to our Internet Banking service to help you manage your accounts.

Our Internet Banking service is a key feature for our new and existing local council customers as it offers:

- *Option of dual or triple authority, requiring multiple signatories to authorise payments*
- *Range of access levels which you can tailor to suit your needs – a feature developed with feedback from council clerks to recognise the segregation of duties between clerks and councillors”*

Charges		Current account under £100k turnover	
		HSBC	Unity
Monthly account fee		£6.50	£6
Automated Credit	Free		£0.00
Bacs	Free		£0.00
Cheques paid		£0.90	£0.00
Debit card payment *	Free		0
Direct Debit	Free		£0.00
Other credits	Free		£0.00
Other debits	Free		£0.00
Standing Order	Free		£0.00
Internet bill payment	Free		£0.00
Post office counter cash in	25 p per credit 1.10% of value		50p per £100 or part there of for each credit
Post office counter cheques in	£1 per credit plus 50p per cheque		30p per cheque (Sent to bank direct by Freepost (envelopes supplied)
Withdrawal of cash at post office	25p per withdrawal plus 1.10% of value		
withdrawal of cash at cash machine *	0.60% of value		

debit card note - Unity Bank do not provide a debit card , they do provide a multipay card via Lloyds bank with a £3 per month fee (set up fee £50), Cash withdrawal £2.50 per withdrawal Minimum withdrawal £50*. Card automatically Paid in full every month - useful to have to avoid Clr expenses i.e. Fasthost/MSoftware etc etc

* Petty Cash procedures would require consideration

Customer Care		
	long wait to speak to a human	average 4 min to answer a call- UK only based call centre
	No facility to email customer services	2-6 hours to answer email
	Changes take a long time	Quick change of signatory process - within 24 hours of receipt
	No specialist knowledge of local councils.	Highly regarded within local government sector (100's of Parish / Town councils use & recommend them) advisors have specialist knowledge of local councils
On line Banking		
access	officers only	any signatory can have viewing permission
authorisation	single user to setup & authorise	Dual authorisation (one to set up one to authorise).
signatories	limited	unlimited - all councillors can be signatories if required.
Instant Access Savings Account Int rate	2.00% AER	2.77% AER