

## **FAQ's – Wastewater maintenance and effluent disposal**

### **Why are you changing the current contract?**

Our current contract with Willow Pumps is coming to an end in the Autumn of 2024. We understand that some customers have not been happy with the current contract, and this presents us with a good opportunity for a fresh look at the market.

### **Why have I received a letter, I am the freehold owner of the property?**

As a freehold owner who pays a charge towards the cost of wastewater maintenance which we maintain we wanted to include you in the consultation to give you an opportunity to make any comments on our intention to enter into a new agreement for the provision of this service.

### **How do I know if I currently pay towards wastewater disposal?**

This information should be contained in your latest service charge statement. In the absence of this you will be able to check this with our service charge team – [servicecharges@aster.co.uk](mailto:servicecharges@aster.co.uk). The cost on your service charge statement will be under the heading "Sewerage".

You can also view your service charges online through [MyAster](#).

MyAster is an online portal where you can monitor your account with Aster, complete tasks yourself and contact us at any time to suit you.

### **Where can I access more information about the services you are looking to provide?**

A description of the services to be provided under the agreement can be found on our website [aster.co.uk/existing-customers/get-involved/consultations](http://aster.co.uk/existing-customers/get-involved/consultations).

### **What will the new contract cover?**

The agreement we intend to enter into is for the maintenance of wastewater infrastructure and effluent disposal this includes sewage treatment plants, septic tanks, surface water pumps and other installations serving homes not connected to mains drainage.

The services to be performed consist of the following:

- (ii) Servicing and Maintenance of wastewater treatment plants, septic tank systems and associated pumping stations including emptying and disposal of wastewater liquor and sludge. Also including routine maintenance and upkeep of mechanical / electrical plant.
- (iii) Reactive and emergency work as required to maintain the continuous function of the above wastewater works and systems.
- (iv) Reactive and emergency work as required to maintain the function of the main drainage pipe network connected to the wastewater systems.

The tender price will not include the cost of the utilities or the Environment Agency Licence.

### **Will the new contract be cheaper?**

Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee the new contract will be cheaper. Since entering the contract with Willow Pumps the economic environment has changed with inflation rates having increased.

### **The plant my property is currently connected to is stoppered off and being emptied by a tanker. Will this continue with the new contractor?**

If the plant your property is connected to has not been repaired/replacement by the time the new contract comes into force then yes, your plant will remain stoppered off.

**I want to disconnect my property from Aster's plant is this possible?**

Yes, it may be possible to disconnect your property from Aster's plant. To do so we would advise you to seek advice from a drainage expert.

**Are you reviewing the current specification?**

Yes, we are. As part of our procurement exercise, Aster have reviewed our current specification with input from both internal stakeholders and an external consultant to ensure that the future specification is best suited for the individual plant requirements and to ensure its operating correctly, and where applicable, is compliant with the Environment Agencies requirements.

**Will you be approaching local or national companies?**

Aster anticipates procuring a contract with a series of regional lots which reflect the location of the equipment. The tender will go to an open market of both regional and national providers and the evaluation will allow for the most suitable contractor for each individual region to be appointed accordingly.

**How long will the new agreement be for?**

The intention is for the new agreement to be for 3 years with a possibility of 2 further 1-year extensions. (Total up to 5 years).

**Why can't I nominate a contractor?**

Due to the size and value of the proposed lots, we are not inviting you to nominate a possible contractor, as Aster are required to comply with the Public Contract Regulations and advertise the contract opportunity by way of a public notice through the Governments 'Find a Tender Service'. This allows for interested companies the opportunity to bid.

However, if you are aware of a contractor who may be interested in the contract, please encourage them to log in to the "find a tender service" website, where they will be able to view our contract notice.

**What happens if the contractor doesn't perform well, do they keep getting the work?**

The contract will say that if works or services are not delivered in accordance with the contract requirements, we may end the contract.

**You say this is a legal consultation, are you now going to add legal costs to my service charges?**

No. Although this consultation process is required by law there are no legal costs involved.

**When do you hope to have the new agreement in place?**

Following completion of a successful consultation and tendering process.

**What if I cannot afford to pay?**

If you are worried about how you will meet the cost, please speak to your housing officer. For more information visit <https://www.aster.co.uk/existing-customers/leaseholder/what-to-do-if-you-are-struggling-to-pay>

**I have received a consultation, but I don't think it's for me.**

If you receive a consultation to your address but not in your name, please let us know, it may be that our records need updating or that the leaseholder is subletting the property to you.

If you sub-let your property, please let us have a correspondence address so we can send future letters to you there.

**I am planning to sell my property before the service described in the notice is completed.**

You should keep the documents safe and pass them to your solicitor when you have accepted an offer. Any potential purchaser needs to be aware of the consultation.

**What if I am not happy with the current services provided?**

Under this consultation process we are unable to deal with complaints about quality of current provisions. Please call the contact centre on 0333 400 8222 to log any issue you are experiencing.

**Where can I go for advice?**

You can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau for independent advice