

Stronger Communities Committee

Date:	Monday 16 September 2019
Title:	Third Party Events on Council Land – Update & Post-Event reports
Contact Officer:	Operations & Estates Officer - John Hickman

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current position regarding 2019 Events which have been held since the last meeting.

Action Taken

Some Members of the Council and the Operations and Estates Officer have met for post event wash up meetings with both the Music Festival and Lib Fest. However it has been more difficult to arrange a meeting with the Carnival, despite the Operations and Estates Officers attempts to carry out a wash up meeting the Carnival organisers have resisted this. The Operations and Estates Officer had wished to discuss several items from the event in order to try and address these issues prior to next year's event. These ranged from the early arrival of one of the entertainers early evening on 11th July camping on the site for the entire event and not leaving until late morning on Sunday 15th July. To the outstanding documentation that was due to be checked on the morning of the event and despite several request is not forthcoming.

Current situation

Play Day West Witney Sports Ground

The Play Day was extremely well attended and well received by all those attending with a wide variety of activities for the children. Several of our sports from West Witney joined in by providing free activities for the children to take part in. The Sports and Social Club provided welfare facilities and light refreshments during the event.

The only issue during the event was car parking due to the number of people that arrived by car with the car parks being full throughout the event. It resulting in 2 x WTC staff members controlling the cars and excess cars being directed into the Trading Estate to find parking in order to stop people parking on the main road verges.

Lib-Fest Wash-up meeting

The Wash up meeting with LibFest was very amicable with the main issue arising being the requirement for stall holders etc. to hold £10 million PLI. Lib Fest was made aware that WTC are looking into this issue as it is understandable it does cause a lot of issues for small

businesses. The Town Clerk will provide a separate report from the Council's Insurance Company.

There was a butane gas canister explosion on one of the food traders stalls during the event causing a small fire, luckily nobody was injured in this incident. This trader had also been used at the WMF, this only highlights the need that all at the event must have the correct level of insurance and that incidents do occur.

Lib-Fest have also provided a note of thanks to Witney Town Council for all the help support and guidance provided.

Lib-fest have submitted their application for their event next year, along with a grant application form for subsidised/free use – the latter will be considered as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process during the next cycle of meetings.

Witney Carnival.

The Witney Carnival have been very reluctant to attend a wash up meeting and as of yet have nothing has been mutually agreed. The outstanding documentation that the Carnival were supposed to check pre the start of the event, and council requested this documentation be photographed to evidence it had been checked, however despite requests this documentation has not been provided.

As the Carnival have not attended a Wash Up meeting the Operations and Estates Officer has not been able address any issues from WTC i.e. the early arrival of two of the entertainers that gained access to the site and camped onsite from Thursday evening 11th July until Sunday mid-morning 14th July despite the carnival being told after the same thing happened in 2018 that this was not acceptable, particularly as it breaches Council bye-laws. The Operations and Estates Officer has also not been able to address the issue with the outstanding information as well as other items.

The only issues it appears the carnival have is to raise the level of PLI that WTC are requesting from stall holders etc. and that the Operations and Estates Officer only asked for evidence of risk assessments, PLI etc. approx. 2 weeks prior to the event. However the carnivals own documentation did state that they would expect all this documentation to be provided to them by 30th July Risk Assessments PLI and Food Safety Certification.

It should be noted that the Witney Carnival have already made an Application to hold the Witney Carnival again next year requesting the whole of the Leys from 4pm on 10th July 2020 until 7pm on 11th July 2020 on the current application form should WTC terms and conditions/application forms for events be changed or updated this application will need to be resigned under the new terms and conditions.

Witney Music Festival Wash Up Meeting

Currently WTC are holding the WMF damages deposit of £1,000 towards the damages caused to football pitch one at the Leys as a result of their event. Currently no requests for any other payment for any damages has been made.

The Music Festival has queried the quote for the repair works provided by WTC's Grounds Contractors to carry out repair works to the football pitch area only. The Operations and Estates Officer has not included any costs for repairs to the rest of the area used by WMF. The music festival have provided a quote for repair works to part of the damaged area of the football field by Ubico for £200 this is purely for amenity grass repairs and not to repair a sports pitch. The Operations and Estates Officer has been asked to gain further quotes regarding the damages however so far has not been successful in obtaining from companies that carry out renovation work on Sports Pitches because contractors are reluctant to undertake these works – particularly because of the amount of machinery required, but as well as the ongoing maintenance with watering the areas etc.

The Grounds Contractors have adjusted there quote to remove the Verti Draining from the cost as requested by councillors at the wash up meeting, reducing the both the quotes for both seed and turf by £350.

These works and the additional costs could have been avoided if the advice of the Operations & Estates Officer was taken at the time. The WMF event manager emailed the Operations and Estates Officer requesting advice regarding the ground Conditions at 09.40 on the 11th June the day prior to arrival on site to set up.

The Operations and Estates Officer clearly gave the following advice and information to the WMF Event Manager.

- Given the weather we have had and the forecast for the next few days right through to Sunday rain is expected according to my weather forecast currently.
- I would not see accessing the field when clearly ground conditions are very wet without having taken proper precautions to protect the ground is fair wear and tear.
- It is for the Music Festival to protect the ground sufficiently to prevent damage if you are unable to access the field without causing large amounts of damage then perhaps you should consider cancelling. Protecting the ground in conditions like this should be accounted for in the Music Festivals plans and allowances for how much this may cost should it arise should have been accounted for.
- Costs to repair damage to the field are difficult to estimate dependant on what damages are done and where, they can easily run well in excess of the £1000 damages deposit WTC already hold.
- Council events policy that WMF have agreed to when signing the application form clearly states that If council land or property at the event location is damaged, destroyed, stolen or removed during the period of the event, whether caused by you or others associated with the event, the cost of reinstating, repairing, replacing or cleansing will be charged to you. **Our valuation of any damage/loss is final.**
- In a more practical note for you I would advise you to prevent all vehicular movement on the football pitch area itself and limit all other vehicular movement to the absolute minimum. I would suggest you seriously consider providing much more substantial ground protection other than woodchip/sphag sorb where vehicular traffic is going to travel over the same area of ground repeatedly I.E. where your event lorries with the equipment, the fork lift/s and the back stage area where you intend to have acts cars and other cars accessing/exiting the site

constantly before during and after the event. I would suggest these areas are protected by at the least some sort of ground protection matting/boards.

- Ensure your fork lift/s are fitted with grassland tyres not the standard tyres used as these will rapidly damage to ground. Prevent sharp movements or tight turns with the fork lift/s.
- The fair operators should already have their own provision for protecting wet ground and should know how to protect the ground as much as possible with their vehicles, normally fair vehicles in wet weather enter from the top of the field and travel down the field leaving the vehicle facing down the field where ever possible rather than up as trying to move off up-hill is much worse than going down-hill.
- Do not allow vehicles especially lorries to make sharp turns only very gentle turns otherwise there wheels will just tear the grass and ground up.
- Do not allow vehicles especially lorries to make sharp turns only very gentle turns otherwise there wheels will just tear the grass and ground up.
- I would suggest again in the real high footfall wear areas you consider using ground protection matting of some form to try and help protect the ground.
- If the ground is badly damaged at this event you should also remember that this may have a damaging **effect on the following two events and even the coming football season.**
- The Leys does tend to dry out fairly quickly however when its wet it also cuts up very easily as was found by the Lib Fest on a previous occasion.
- I would also advise you to keep in mind the safety of both your staff and the members of the public given the current weather conditions.
- I have seen many events on this field and I have seen the results of when it has been wet on several occasions which have quite often lead to quite a bit of damage when proper and sufficient precautions have not been taken.

The WMF Event Manager advised the Operations and Estates officer as follows.

- It is Perrin (from the fair) and myself that have raised the issue with the event organisers. I am meeting with Perrin this evening to discuss.
- At the moment the following is in place:
- Woodchip on standby
- Contractor vehicles allowed on site only for Wednesday - no non essential or management vehicles.
- Driving on the football pitch is forbidden on Wednesday.
- The fair will enter from the top of the field and leave via the production gate on a one way system around the edge of the site.
- Contractor vehicles are not allowed to make sharp turns and where necessary will also follow a one way route.

The festival organisers are aware of the risks and liabilities so ultimately any costs will fall to them - which I have made sure they are aware of.

The Operations and Estates Officer replied to this information by responding as follows,

- Thanks for the update, I have never asked the WMF to have their own track way but to have one on stand by should it be required, I know they are very expensive but so can repairs to the grounds be if they are not used when required.

The Operations and Estates Officer handed the Leys over to the music festival on the morning on the 12th June 08.30 to WMF.

The Operations visited site on the 13th June when the stage location was discussed as it was currently in an area that would have put all the major footfall for the stage directly in the goal area. At this point WMF were just starting to lay track way in high use areas but the areas of the football pitch had already been badly damaged by this time. The WMF were still trying to access more ground protection matting for the site and what they had was provided by the fair. He asked if they had approached local hire companies to see if they had any ground protection available.

The Operations and Estates Officer visited site again on the morning of the 14th June the event was due to start prior to the visit from WTC H&S consultants that afternoon.

The WMF asked the Operations Officer what could be done regarding the ground that had been damaged directly in front of the stage where the main crowd would stand, the area was rutted and very muddy and had been cut up by vehicular traffic mainly fork lifts delivering equipment for/to the stage. WMF had been advised by their provider that their Sphag Sorb was not suitable for the area in front of the stage. The Operations and Estates Officer suggested the use of ground protection matting however the WMF said this was not suitable, however if the correct type of matting is used and connected together correctly it is suitable however they clearly did not have access to this equipment.

The WMF asked if another alternative such as gravel could be used the Operations and Estates Officer informed WMF this was not suitable. However the Operations and Estates Officer did contact the Dave Gilson from the Grounds Contractors at 10.25 who maintain the pitches to ask if sand could be used just to make the area safe for foot traffic. Continental Landscapes said that soft sand would be OK. It should be noted that sand would make the area safe to walk on by drying up and stabilising the muddy conditions somewhat however this will not protect the ground from compression especially when the ground is saturated.

At the Wash up Meeting the WMF have stated that they made an executive decision following the Operations and Estates Officers advice and information below to not use ground protection. By the time they realised the damage that was being done and that they had to use ground protection this only prevented further damages in the areas it was used and they had insufficient protection available or access to sufficient ground protection to cover all the areas that really required ground protection.

The other issue for the WMF was the level of PLI required for the stall holders etc.

The Operations and estates Officer did suggest to the WMF at the hand back of the field that perhaps that in future the event could be turned to face the other direction so that the sound from the stage was sent out over the trading Estate and the fields beyond. This would also more importantly ease some of the compaction on the football pitch as the stage and

the main crowd area in front of the stage would not be over the football pitch itself but in the area before it, however the WMF felt this was not possible.

Pinders Circus

Will be attending the Leys Recreation Ground on 30st September until 3rd October they will be on pitch one side of the Leys Recreation Ground between the top of the football pitch and the new path that leads across the field to Sainsbury's.

They have paid their £1,000 deposit, and are being invoiced £670 for the 4 days including one standpipe as per WTC's current charges. They have also provided all relevant documentation.

Ground Protection

Ground Protection will still be required to the Leys in the event of wet weather for events even if football is no longer played on pitch one side of the Leys. In order to ensure the field is in suitable condition for the next event and also to reduce the compaction as eventually the constant compaction with the level of events will make the field unsuitable for use as an events site in wet conditions.

The larger side of the Leys would still need to be protected when events use that area as it will still be used for football and cricket or any other sport if the area is available.

The ground also needs to be in a usable condition for members of the public to use it following the events.

At the Halls & Green Spaces meeting on 9 September when considering the future of football pitch 1 the Committee asked the Operations & Estates Officer to seek quotes for ground protection to see what can be done in the future and to hopefully be able to restore pitch 1 back into a playable condition.

Ground Renovations

Given the level of events a certain amount of ground renovations will still need to be carried out on areas used solely for events. In order to keep the grass sward in a condition that can accept events and ensure the ground does not get over compacted. To levels that will also cause issues to members of the public that use it at other times even if the area is not used for sports.

Terms and Conditions of Hire

The Operations and estates Officer would ask that council look at its current requirement for PLI for small stalls etc. other than contractors, traders and caterers. The Town Clerk has provided a separate report on this having sought advice from the Council's insurance company.

It was the Committees intention to hold a group meeting with event organisers to discuss the Council's terms and conditions in order for a review to take place of its Terms & Conditions – however there is a reluctance from the Carnival Committee to meet and therefore it is hard for the Officers to discharge this recommendation. However this does not negate the requirement to review these Terms & Conditions so it is suggested that Officers work with a couple of Councillors in the first instance so that a report can be brought back to the next meeting.

Additionally the Council should also look at its terms and conditions regarding small events up to around 50 people where the current terms and conditions can seem onerous to the applicants, also provide clear clarification as to what is regarded as an event.

Guidance could also be added to items that would not be allowed at events and specific

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Councillors should consider the future of large events on the Leys Recreation Ground, the impact of additional traffic to the Town, waste disposal, sewage and waste water, emissions from diesel generators.

Council should consider the carbon footprint of each separate event and how the organisers plan to offset this.

The request for this information should form part of Witney Town Council Events Policy and Terms and Conditions of Hire.

The Operations and Estates Officer would recommend that events are warned early of this change to Witney Town Councils Terms and conditions due to the cost implications this could have on the organisers of the events.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

If members of the Public are invited to participate in a staged and planned event the organiser is responsible for public safety. **There is also a responsibility on the venue/land owner to ensure the safety of the public who attend the event.**

Financial implications

The associated cost of repairs to the Leys football pitch one if undertaken. Quotes have been obtained from the Council's Grounds Contractors which are attached. A damage deposit of £1,000 for WMF is currently held.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following,

- If WMF should pay towards the damages on pitch one at the Leys Recreation Ground, and if so, how much of their deposit should be retained?
- The application by Witney Carnival to hold next year's event on the 11th July.
- The setting of a ground renovation works budget to allow for ground renovations as required at the end of event/s.
- Council carry out a review of the current terms and conditions – particularly PLI levels.

Appendices attached:

1. Thank you from Libfest
2. Outstanding documentation for Witney Carnival
3. Witney Carnival's booking application form
4. Leys Pitch renovations – email from Contractors & quotes for seeding/turfing

Other documentation available on request:

1. Report on Witney Play & Activity Day from OPA
2. Libfest Post Event analysis & Incident report
3. Witney Music Festival Post Event SAG Feedback