
Agenda Item: Online Bookings System

Meeting Date: Monday, 22 November 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the procurement of an online facilities booking system.

Background

This initiative originated as an online sports pitch bookings project, aimed at simplifying the booking process for local clubs and improving administrative efficiency within the Council. Further details were presented in the report to the Parks & Recreation Committee on 9 September 2024.

In November 2024, the Council approved a revenue growth item of £5,000 within the Parks & Recreation Committee's 2025/26 budget to support the procurement of an online facilities booking system. It was noted at the time that the total project cost was likely to be closer to £8,000.

Current Situation

Progress on this project has been delayed during the year due to several factors, including the Council's change of IT supplier, associated system upgrades, and the migration of data.

Following a review of the project by officers, the following points were noted:

- Football clubs already have designated grounds and are able to confirm the number of matches they intend to play at each facility. Charges will be applied accordingly, and all pitches will be marked up as agreed (Parks & Recreation Committee, September 2025).
- One of the facilities identified for inclusion in the project has not yet formally transferred into the Council's ownership.
- The Council's current bookings software provider has since introduced an online bookings portal, allowing members of the public to view and provisionally book facilities online via the Council's website, subject to officer confirmation.

The Council would need to upgrade to the current bookings providers web-based system – a matter which was already being investigated by officers as part of the Council's IT provision. If the Committee is agreeable to upgrade to the online bookings module, it is anticipated that

this system could be implemented and made available for public use between January and February 2026. The benefits include (from the provider):

- **Save time** - reduce admin workload by up to 30–50%
- **Go online** - residents can check availability and make provisional bookings 24/7
- **Completely customisable** - match your council's look and feel
- **Fantastic feedback** - "Sleek, intuitive", "User-friendly", "It will reduce workload by 30–50%", "Increase income and offer better service with no increase to the cost of the end user"

What it offers

- **Streamlined Booking Process**
No more phone calls, paper diaries, or endless email chains as everything's handled online.
- **Accessible Anywhere**
Add your booking page to your website, social media, emails, or even your Google Maps listing.
- **24/7 Online Self-Service**
Customers can make requests anytime, anywhere - no need to wait for office hours.
- **Real-Time Availability**
See live availability and eliminate double bookings instantly.
- **Automatic Confirmations & Reminders**
Instant notifications reduce no-shows and free up valuable staff time.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Introducing an online bookings system can improve access and convenience for many, but it may disadvantage people with limited digital skills, poor internet access, disabilities, or language barriers unless inclusive design and alternative booking options are provided
- b) Biodiversity – no direct impact
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct impact
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – This will reduce the need for additional paperwork to be provided.

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.

An online bookings system carries risks such as cyber-security threats, system downtime, user errors, and digital exclusion for those without internet access. The majority of these can be mitigated against.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

An online bookings system creates social value by making services more accessible and inclusive, allowing people to book at their convenience while reducing barriers related to mobility, communication, or time.

Financial implications

- The upgrade to the current provider's bookings system will be:
 - Cost of web-based system £1,900 per annum
 - Cost of integrating bookings system onto the Website £86 one off for installation and £250 annual support and maintenance
- An estimated annual cost for the above has been included in the RFO's budget-setting report for 2026-27.
- The Council holds an IT Infrastructure EMR £25,000 where any additional costs may be funded from.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider whether the Council should implement the online bookings portal with the Council's current provider or,
 - Implement in line with the original aspiration of the Council or
 - Not implement any online bookings system.