

HALLS AND GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 13th January 2020

Title: Leys Recreation Ground - Football Pitch One Renovation Works

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

BACKGROUND

This item was deferred from the last meeting of this Committee, minute H446(b) refers:

“The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. Members discussed the fact that that the area containing pitch 1 could not host both sports and events. Quotes had been obtained to put the pitch back into operation but members agreed that it would be better to leave this side of The Leys purely for events, although some basic maintenance and decompaction would be required for the public’s ad hoc use, as it was still ultimately a recreation ground for public use.

The Committee discussed the recommendations made by the Operations and Estates Officer but agreed to defer these as there were meetings with WODC (with the possibility of new pitches) and Wood Green School coming up. Members also felt that they needed to discuss options further with the Spartans before making firm decisions.

RESOLUTION

b) to defer consideration of the Operations and Estates Officer’s recommendations relating to the Leys Recreation Ground and maintenance of football pitch 1 until meetings had been held with WODC, the Spartans and Wood Green School;”

The original report presented at the last meeting is provided below, along with Officer recommendations. The Chair, Cllr Gwatkin along with Cllr Ashbourne met with Officers from WODC – Martin Holland and Rachel Biles.

ACTION TAKEN

The Operations and Estates Officer has been in touch with several companies that carry out football pitch renovation but only one company has responded regarding quoting for the work. He has therefore met with this contractor to discuss the pitch boring and digging test holes to look at the current condition of the ground and turf to suggest the best way forward to renovate this pitch.

CURRENT POSITION

It was thought that it would not be advisable to completely renew the pitch as this would involve the pitch being closed to any use for a minimum of 18 months while the works were carried out and the new pitch established itself.

It was decided that the best possible way to renovate the pitch would be as follows:

Ideal Solution would be ASAP whilst the weather is still warm enough to germinate seed.

Verti Drain, Drag mat, Top Dress 80 tonnes root zone mix, over seed from 2 or 3 directions and Fertilise. Followed by again in the Spring over seed, Verti Drain, review top dressing and fertiliser, maintain grass at 30mm-60mm ongoing. This option will undoubtedly have been missed by the time of this meeting.

The remaining solution would be to carry out all the required works in the early spring and end of summer just prior to the start of the football season. These works would require that the pitch was not used for any purpose before the start of the football season in September 2020 however this would not be practical as council has already agreed event dates for 2020 starting in May.

Both Whitehorse Contractors and Continental Landscapes have quoted for the additional works.

A meeting with the chairs from both the Halls and Green Spaces and Stronger Communities committees has been held to discuss the issue that it really is not possible to hold the combination of both the football on pitch one and the events, especially given the events are taking place at the time when the football pitch renovations need to be carried out and establish.

Thoughts were that WTC should consider looking at not holding sports on the Leys pitch 1 one but only on the cricket side of the field pitch 1 side should become an events field only.

Events other than the carnival and Witney Feast as established users of the Cricket side of the field should be the only events allowed to use the Cricket pitch side of the Leys this area would reserve for Cricket, junior football and other sporting items only. No other events would be allowed to use this area in order to be able to maintain it in good condition for sports going forward. Events would not be allowed on any of WTC's other sports pitches, these would be solely for sporting use only.

There would still be a requirement to protect vehicular access areas, high vehicle movement areas and to carry out annual de-compaction of the whole of Leys pitch one side to keep the area in reasonable condition for public use when events are not present. The vehicle access and movement areas could be much more easily protected by standard vehicle ground protection matting.

Councillors and Officers should discuss with WODC and Woodgreen school re WTC taking on the Woodgreen site and issuing this area to site Spartans from the 2020/21 season and on instead of the Leys. WTC would have to address the issue with access to the changing rooms at Woodgreen School on both Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year. WODC would need to be spoken to regarding WTC maintaining both the pitches at Woodgreen and perhaps the whole field or the area being transferred to WTC with a sum to assist with currently required and ongoing maintenance.

The existing amounts within the current years Leys pitch 1 sum could be used to help prepare these two pitches ready for next year's season. The pitch at King Georges could also be moved to Woodgreen with this pitch ongoing maintenance and end of season renovation costs being moved to Woodgreen as well. This means the only real additional cost to WTC would be amenity grass cutting for Leys pitch one and the football pitch at King Georges Field areas.

There would be some additional cost setting the pitches up initially we already have the goal posts but would require new sockets cost approx. £300. Contractors have also allowed for cutting the grass to the rest of Woodgreen also the hedge which is currently overgrown and un-maintained.

Woodgreen School would also need to make a commitment that the changing rooms at the school would be made available every weekend to sports teams using the Woodgreen Field on Saturdays, Sundays and weekday evenings.

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.

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.

Making Pitch One side of the Leys the WTC events Field and maintaining it accordingly will limit the risk that WTC currently has using this area for both sports and events

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There would be ongoing costs associated to the maintenance of Woodgreen Field to be added to the current grounds contract.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Making Pitch one side of the Leys recreation ground into an events field.
2. Making the Cricket and Junior football side of the Leys into a sports only area, with the only exception being the current Witney Carnival and caravan & vehicle parking for Witney Feast no other events to be allowed usage of this area.
3. No events to be allowed on WTC's other sports facilities.
4. Consulting with WODC and Woodgreen regarding WTC taking responsibility for Woodgreen Field and the unhindered provision of the school changing rooms, parking on Saturdays, Sundays and weekday evenings for sports teams.
5. If WTC take the responsibility for the Woodgreen Field from WODC what level of committed sum would WTC expect going forward toward the future maintenance of this area.