

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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DATE: Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020

TITLE: Events update & Leys Pitch One update

CONTACT OFFICER: Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

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### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current position regarding Events since the last meeting and the current position regarding Leys Recreation Ground football pitch one side.

### **CURRENT SITUATION**

#### REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The Royal British Legion wants to continue holding the annual Remembrance Sunday Parade however they no longer intend to take responsibility for it and would like WTC to assume this responsibility. Officers have met with the Royal British Legion representatives regarding this matter and are in the process of considering what type of event WTC can provide.

#### EVENT REQUESTS

Several event requests have been received for the Leys Recreation Ground in addition to the events already agreed, these are:

- Leys, American Circus
- Leys, Helicopter Landing to collect bride and groom from St Mary's church following the couples wedding.
- Leys, Christmas Wonderland 3 weeks prior to Christmas 2020, possible Ice rink, Christmas Market, Fair rides, etc.
- West Witney, West Witney Primary School Colour run.

The events on the Leys would obviously be dependent on Councils decision regarding Leys Pitch one becoming an events field.

## LEYS RECREATION GROUND PITCH ONE SIDE

The Halls and Green Spaces Committee of the Town Council has agreed that the Leys Pitch one side can be used solely for events and no longer used for sports. 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 and this area would be reserved 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 these sports going forward. Large events would not be allowed on any of WTC's other sports pitches, these would be solely for minor events i.e. play day etc. and sporting use only.

## GROUND PROTECTION

If this was the case then a simpler form of ground protection would still need to be provided for events on the Leys events Field such as access mats in high footfall or vehicle traffic areas, especially when ground conditions are wet in order to prevent excessive damage to the ground. The ground also needs to be protected to ensure it is in a usable condition for the following event. The ground also needs to be in a usable condition for members of the public to use it following each event as it is a public open space for use by all off the residents of Witney.

The ground would need annual de-compaction, in order to prevent compaction building up to a point where the area is not suitable to be used by members of the public in between events, or preventing the ground from draining sufficiently when wet conditions prevail.

Council should also consider making reinforced trackways on to the field from main entrance areas to assist vehicular access and remove the requirement for ground protection in these areas of heavy wear.

## GROUND RENOVATIONS

Given the current level of events, a certain level of ground renovations will still need to be carried out on areas used solely for events. This is to keep the grass sward in a condition that can accept them 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 or affect the drainage of the area.

The provision of a £5,000 rolling annual ground renovation budget for the Leys to maintain the ground in an acceptable condition following events and to include de-compaction, maintaining the grass sward and levelling uneven areas would be beneficial. Any surplus budget can then accumulate over time to allow for additional events field works such as rein-forced trackways etc.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF HIRE

The Operations and Estates Officer and the newly appointed Compliance and Environment Officer met with representatives from Lib Fest, Witney Music Festival and Witney Carnival to discuss the terms and conditions of hire. Dates were agreed for documentation to be provided by the events to WTC. Final Event Management Plans will be provided 6 weeks prior to the event and any outstanding documentation from stall holders etc. provide 2 weeks prior to the event.

Officers have also looked at Public Liability Insurance amounts and the majority of PLI will remain at 10 million pounds, however 5 million pounds will be accepted for low risk groups, stall holders, charity groups, caterers etc.

A new Draft Policy and Application form has been drawn up for council agreement with the relevant timings for EMP and supporting documentation.

## **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.

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

## **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.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The associated cost that will be incurred if pitch one side of the Leys Recreation Ground is used as solely an events field in future and the setting of an annual rolling budget of £5,000 for this.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. The suggested use of Pitch One side of the Leys Recreation Ground solely as an events field going forward;
2. No further events to be held on the Leys Recreation Ground other than the existing use by Witney Carnival and Witney Feast;
3. Large events would not be allowed use of WTC's other sports pitches, these would be solely for minor events i.e. play day etc. and sporting use only.
4. The Draft Events Policy and Application documentation including changes to PLI.
5. Provision of an annual ground renovation rolling budget of £5,000 for the Leys in order to maintain the ground in an acceptable condition. This would include de-compaction, over seeding as required, maintaining the grass sward and levelling uneven areas following events;
6. The provision of re-in forced trackways to main entrance to the Events Field.