

SPORT AND PLAY COMMITTEE

Date: 1st March 2021

Title: Bowls Irrigation Systems

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

Background

Following recent issues regarding the Bowls Green Irrigation systems breaking down at each of these greens and the associated issues getting the bowls clubs to maintain and repair them. Continental landscapes have asked if the irrigation systems can be taken into Witney Town Council ownership. It has been suggested to the clubs that clubs hand the Irrigation systems to Witney Town Council. Council at the Sport and Play Committee meeting of the 2nd November 20 Item SP354 resolved that

SP354 2. that subject to a verbal update from the Operations and Estates Officer from a meeting with the bowls club, the bowls green irrigation systems be transferred into the control and responsibility of the Council.

Current Position

The Operations and Estates Officer wrote to all three clubs stating that I was looking at charging an additional sum of £550 on the current bowls greens annual hire fees payable to Witney Town Council the two clubs at West Witney cost would be split £225 for each club and the Leys Club the full £550, this would cover the annual maintenance charges for each green of £420 as quoted by SJS contractors with an additional sum of £130 for additional works required to bring the system up to its full working potential and maintain it there. This money would be held by Witney Town Council if not used towards any works required to bring the system up to working at its full potential and maintaining it there on going. Should works required cost more than the available sum council will fund the works and reclaim the sums from this charge over time. If at any point, there are remaining sums these will be held to be used when required for future repairs/improvements or replacement of the system or part thereof.

However, with the current situation regarding Covid 19 and the restrictions in place the clubs have asked not to proceed at this point. They feel they are unsure of their futures having lost membership during lock down and the uncertainty as to whether they will be able to play or not this season.

The Operations and Estates Officer has pointed out that the clubs will still need to ensure the irrigation systems are fully operational for this season as the system will be required to keep

the greens in good condition throughout the summer regardless of whether they are playing or not.

The Operations and Estates Officer has suggested that the situation is looked at again in the Autumn towards the end of the season when hopefully there will be a clearer situation and possibly the irrigation systems can be transferred to Witney Town Council before the end of 2021 so the systems can be prepared by Witney Town Council for the 2022 season.

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.

With contractors having full control of the bowls green irrigation systems, it is hoped that water usage can be kept to a minimum of what is required to keep the bowls greens in a good condition without excessive over or under watering.

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.

Financial implications

The associated costs for the maintenance and upkeep of the irrigation systems to be reclaimed through the bowls green hire charges.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report.