

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 18 July 2022

Title: Sports Pitch Bookings System

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Background

The open spaces strategy identified the need to review the current bookings system, this has been reaffirmed by Witney football clubs representatives in annual meetings with Town Council officers.

Working in the most effective and efficient manner, action EE 10 undertake a review of current sports and facility booking systems used and finesse to benefit all parties.

The current booking process involves submitting individual paper forms for each pitch booking. These are then booked onto the council booking system manually by administration staff and finally invoiced to clubs. This process involves a large amount of administration hours, pre season planning and pressure on the council to manage pitch availability. In addition to this, time also has to be spent invoicing and chasing payments. This process is a historic process used by the Town Council but is also in place due to the limitation of the current bookings system.

Current Situation

Both software applications reviewed by Town Council officers aim to alleviate all the identified problems with the current process, in the same way. The software packages are currently in use by other local councils.

The software packages both work by supplying clubs with a user account of which they can make pitch bookings. A council administrator can then create restrictions such as club A can only play on pitches 8 and 6 on a Saturday. An invoicing system can be set up, but both software suppliers have stressed the software is best optimised through clubs paying via debit/credit card before the booking is confirmed of which they do have the functionality.

Advantages

The major advantage with both software applications is the time saved in the administration of the booking process. Once set up with booking restrictions by council admin and user account for all clubs the system is designed to be fully intuitive by football clubs and place the onus on them to make pitch bookings and make payments. The time saved in administration would also be mirrored by the football club's admin as they wouldn't need to submit booking

forms and wait for confirmation from council staff. This would also save time in pre-season planning by senior officers with pitch allocation/management.

Disadvantages

The software does not link into the council's current booking system. This was first investigated by officers, but the current booking system does not have a web-based platform at the surface to enable a user to make bookings autonomously.

Although additional pitch bookings may be made through the new software the revenue wouldn't offset the additional cost of the software. The cost is only offset against the saving of administration time.

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.

The implementation of the software would be a major change for Witney Town Council and football teams in relation to the process of pitch booking. The system would ultimately take time for both parties to adapt too in which of course criticism would be received.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- Sports key annual license cost of £6650.00 Pricing based on the number of pitches.
- Pitch Booking annual license cost of £5700.00 Pricing based on the number of pitches.
- There are no allocated budgets for a software solution to manage the sports pitch booking process.

Recommendations

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

1. Consider if a software solution to the pitch booking process is required.