

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 5 September 2022

Title: Bowls Greens - Ditch Infill

Contact Officer: Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer - Angus Whitburn

Background

Both of the bowling green ditches are filled with gravel, once a year this has to be removed by hand and washed free of dirt. During the annual bowls, teams meeting Witney Town bowls raised issues with the gravel infill and recommend it was replaced with rubber matting. A proposal in the past was rubber infill but as it has already been mulched down it does eventually need replacing and is costly and hard to dispose of.

Current Situation

There are multiple solutions on the market but the most effective option is rubber spiked matting called hedgehog matting. It is a long rubber mat with spikes sticking out that catch the bowls. This can be rolled away and stored each season in the greenhouse at the Leys and clubhouse at West Witney.

Benefit to Witney Town Council

The major benefit of this solution is the reduction in maintenance, freeing up the works team for other tasks. The maintenance of the ditches is a labour-intensive task. Each year the gravel is dug out of the ditches equating to moving 2-3 tones of material. Once complete it is washed clean and placed back, this helps the appearance for a few months but it quickly muddies up making it a bit of a futile task. Also, throughout the year it requires regular weed and debris clearance. In contrast, the hedgehog matting would require some minor leaf clearance and periodic washing.

Benefit To Bowls Clubs

The gravel is hard to maintain an aesthetic appearance which is important to the bowls teams. It also damages bowls when the roll of the green into them. The hedgehog matting would be easier to maintain an acceptable appearance due to its reduced maintenance and it wouldn't damage the bowls.

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.

The most environmentally conscious option would be to reuse material from another operation, but all would eventually break down such as woodchip or rubber mulch. Rubber mulch is hard to dispose of and woodchip would hold water rotting the boarding and have a similar issue to the gravel infill.

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 cost for a set of Hedgehog bowls green liners is around £1800.00 - £2200.00 for each bowls green.

The leys recreation ground has a sports equipment budget that would cover these works

West Witney's sports equipment budget is not sufficient to cover the cost at West Witney bowls, however it could be met from the Sports Improvement Earmarked Reserve if the Councillors are so minded to support the project.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the request from the bowls teams to install hedgehog matting.