

Large grounds maintenance equipment

Background

The Town Council own a New Holland tractor purchased in August 2008 at a cost of £29,819, which also pulls a Trimax mower purchased in August 2007 at a cost of £8,600. The tractor was purchased after the Trimax mower because the Trimax mower was too heavy for the previous tractor. The Town Council continues to incur an annual charge of £232 plus VAT from the finance company, whilst the tractor is in the Town Council's possession.

The ride on Ransome Mower was purchased in May 2007 a cost of £12,979.

In recent years there have concerns about the tractors weight and its tyres not being appropriate for the surfaces it is used on. Butt Field flagged that the weight of the tractor was not suitable for the pitches and have since purchased their own light weight tractor and mower. The tractor and Trimax continue to be used at Wynhill and the Sound Banks (around the Langdale Grove area). Although, the weight of the tractor remains a concern especially in wetter weather as it churns up the grass. In these circumstances the Ransome is used as the tractor causes too much damage.

The Ransome mower is preferred for all of the play areas and used for the follow up mowing at Butt Field (the Town Council remains responsible for the perimeter areas), Wynhill and the Linear Park. The preference for the Cemetery is hand mowing with occasional use of the Ransome mower.

The Ransome can be used for all areas should the tractor breaks down, but the tractor cannot complete all tasks that the Ransome completes.

Issues

The Ransome mower has recently experienced several failures and has had £1,212.25 spent in repairs this financial year. It has now developed a further hydraulic leak and remains off the road. As well as being a vital piece of grounds maintenance equipment, it creates a further issue, as staff are having to walk with their equipment to their work areas, because the Ransome is off the road. It has been said that the hydraulic system is of the age that if one pipe is replaced, the aged pipes next along, receives added pressure and this is what has happened with the latest failure.

The tractor has not been without incident as it recently had an oil leak which trailed oil through the centre of Bingham. This issue has since been corrected.

Next steps

Demos of ride on mowers have been ongoing and by the time of the meeting two demonstrations will have taken place. A third demo is being arranged for week commencing 10 August.

Contact with the Rugby Club has been made, to identify, via their own pitch maintenance report, suitable equipment for the mowing of the pitches. This will be considered alongside identifying the most appropriate equipment for the Town Council's grass cutting responsibilities.

All companies will be supplying quotes for outright purchase and contract hire with service packages. Providing Council with as many options as possible when considering the finances. This information will be brought before Committee as soon as it is available.

However, that leaves the Town Council, in the immediate term, without it's all-rounder ride-on mower in the midst of the grass cutting season and without a source of transport for one of the grounds staff. The Town Council has looked to lease hire a ride-on mower however that is proving difficult as the lease hire vehicles are demo vehicles so are not road registered. A trailer would be required to transport the ride-on mower to site, somewhat defeating the purpose. Contact has been made with Streetwise to see if they have a ride-on that the Town Council could hire in the short-term. Other lease hire companies will also be contacted.

As an aside and for information purposes, the Depot and Recreation Equipment Reserves for the equipment replacements currently stands at £35,246.

There will likely be further information on a temporary solution before Tuesday's meeting. If appropriate an updated report will be issued or a verbal update will be given at the meeting.

It will not be possible to decide upon a long-term solution going forward at the meeting, but temporary decisions to keep on top of the grass cutting and identifying alternate modes of transport will be required. Work will continue to identify and evaluate all possible machinery replacements and corresponding options for the long-term and will be brought before Recreation and Amenities for consideration.