

Committee: Open Spaces

Date: 7 February 2023

Title: Licences and pitch fees for football and cricket 2023

Purpose of Report

For Members to consider and discuss the suggested licences and pitch fees between the Town Council and the football clubs and cricket club for the use of the pitches on Britten's Field and the Wharf Lane Recreation Ground from 2023 onwards.

Recommendation:

1. Members resolve to recommend to Full Council the pitch fees shown in Option X to be incorporated in the Schedule of Charges and in the proposed Licence for each of the relevant cricket and football clubs.
2. Members resolve to recommend to Full Council to accept the licences with any amendments considered necessary for the relevant cricket and football clubs who use the pitches on the recreation ground and Britten's Field.

Background:

1. Originally, there was a 3 year licence to use space on the Town Council owned recreation ground for playing cricket and football dated 1 March 1977. The licence was between Town Council and the Trustees of Ilminster Cricket and Football Club as they were known at that time.
2. A licence to use space on the recreation ground dated 21 February 1980 was between the Town Council and the Ilminster Town Association Football Club, as they were known at that time, and referred to the western portion of the recreation ground, which belongs to the Council, on Wharf Lane.
3. No evidence of a more recent licence has been found in relation to Ilminster Cricket Club using the IEF land as this was the reason why the Town Council were unable to grant tenure, only a nets licence:

Open Spaces 5th November 2011 Minute 12 Cricket Club nets licence

Cllr Shepherd reported that the new nets had been funded by various grants including a grant from the ECB. This grant required a formal commitment from the Town Council to the long term use of the playing area. As the Council could not grant security of tenure, a nets licence had been drawn up.

4. The Town Council agreed for a Recreation Ground Users Group to be set up.

Town Council 17th October 2017 Minute 329 Resolved that a Recreation Ground Users Group was set up. The group formed in 2018 and was a forum

for discussion on matters relating to the active use of the Wharf Lane Recreation Ground and Britten's Field and included representatives from the clubs that use the area, members of the public and some Town Councillors and staff. They made recommendations to the Open Spaces Committee about the management and maintenance of the Wharf Lane Recreation Ground and Britten's Field as well as improvements to the equipment and facilities of these areas. They had no delegated or decision-making powers.

5. The Town Council agreed for the officers to negotiate up to date agreements with the clubs, and for the Recreation Ground Users Group to be reinstated.
Town Council 18th October 2022 Minute 2022-0126-TC

22-0035-OS Football club and cricket club fees

*Members **RESOLVED** by 4 votes for and 2 abstentions (Cllr Shepherd and Cllr Paul) to Recommend to Full Council that Officers be delegated authority to negotiate up to date agreements with all clubs that regularly use Britten's Field and the recreation ground.*

*Members **RESOLVED** by 9 votes for, 2 against and 1 abstention that Officers be delegated authority to negotiate up to date agreements with all clubs that regularly use Britten's Field and the recreation ground.*

Proposer Cllr Hamilton Seconded Cllr Keitch

22-0043-OS Licensing 2023/2024

*Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend to Full Council that the Recreation Ground Users Group be reconstituted.*

*Members **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Recreation Ground Users Group be reconstituted.*

Proposer Cllr Jenner-Hurford Seconded Cllr Paul

6. Over the past three years, officers have had difficulties answering questions and complaints from the residents of Ilminster and outlying villages, in relation to who has been using or is going to be using various pitches and areas on the recreation ground and Britten's Field at any particular moment in time.
7. In addition to various questions and complaints about activities that have been taking place or about to take place, there have been enquiries from various organisations wishing to avail themselves of areas of council land that might be suitable for their activities.
8. There have been in the past a number of complaints from both members of the public and from members of staff over inappropriate actions by players from both cricket and football teams. These incidents have been reported to the clubs and to the police along with evidence to verify the complaints when provided.
9. Officers have received enquiries from other groups who are interested in using space on the recreation ground and Britten's Field such as the walking

football club and a croquet club who had enquired about using the grandstand pitch or other pitches in the summer months this year. In addition, during some public consultation that took place in November 2021 and November 2022, members of the public enquired about the possibility of rugby pitches being allowed on the recreation ground or Britten's Field.

10. Other groups such as a childcare group, and Green Ilminster have used space on the recreation ground for other activities, however it is difficult to confirm such events when the officers are not aware of training/matches.
11. It also means that time is consumed for outside staff trying to plan maintenance and reparation work due to lack of prior awareness and knowledge of possible activities. Whilst we are aware that clubs do endeavour to liaise there are times when human error creeps in and one person thinks someone else has notified the council and vice versa.
12. As a result of there having been no formal notification of matches, or training days from either of the cricket club or football clubs, officers have been left unable to answer the public's questions about the use of the land at a particular moment in time.
13. The council has shown through it's willingness to sign a recent agreement in respect of the grandstand pitch to support the activities of the football club (and youth football club) in their endeavours to promote their sport.

Report:

14. This report covers possible licences and pitch fees for the use of the 'grandstand pitch' on the recreation ground. The 3/4 football pitch and the cricket pitch on IEF land. The cricket pitch and three smaller pitches on Britten's Field (5v5, 7v7, 9v9) as can be seen in the respective licences **Appendix 8A, Appendix 8B and Appendix 8C.**
15. The white fenced Archie Gooch Football Pitch is not part of this report as that pitch falls under a separate lease held between the Town Council and Ilminster Sports Club Ltd.
16. The 3/4 football pitch and the cricket pitch on IEF land are now currently part of ongoing discussions for a separate lease between the IEF and Ilminster Cricket Club which should be completed in 2023. Aspects of the use of this land will be allowed to continue in the manner in which it currently operates pending the new leases.
17. As there are no current licences in place, it is recommended that formal licences for regular users of the recreation ground and Britten's Field pitches are discussed and agreed that is, the Ilminster Town Football Club, the Ilminster Town Youth Football Club and Ilminster Cricket Club Ltd.

18. Officers have researched previous licences and also considered information gained over the previous three years to produce a list of conditions for the clubs to discuss at the Recreation Ground Users Group (RUG) meeting. Contact was also made with other councils in order to establish how licences were being both written and implemented for their facilities.
19. An initial meeting on the 6th September 2022 with the three main users of the pitches, the cricket club, the senior football club and the youth football club was held to discuss the proposed conditions
20. Prior to the meeting, the three clubs provided the days/times of when they would use each of the pitches from April 2023 to March 2024.
21. The conditions to be included in a licence had previously been discussed at the RUG meeting held in November 2022, and the representative of Ilminster Town Youth Football Club (ITYFC) offered to review the suggested conditions and bring them back to the next RUG meeting in January 2023.
22. At the RUG meeting in January 2023, new revised conditions were put forward by the ITYFC and discussed. Amendments to these were agreed by the group. These conditions are now incorporated into the proposed licences at **Appendices 8A, 8B and 8C**.
23. The emphasis is on better communications being established between the Town Council and all users of the land, enabling them to work together. It is about enabling the community to obtain full access to land that the council owns in a fair and equitable manner. It is not about giving priority to any one group or organisation.
24. It is the Town Council's responsibility to enable open spaces to be made available to all the residents of Ilminster whilst at the same time, endeavouring to maximise income. This is in an effort to ensure that facilities are self-funding and not a burden on the community through the precept (council tax).
25. Pitch fees charged by local Town Councils have been researched to enable a comparison of three options for the clubs using the pitches in Ilminster. Having looked at the various comparisons and the current cost of living crisis implications, officers feel that an equitable way forward would be the adoption of Option 2 as shown on **Appendix 8D**.
26. Members should note that in recent years, for reasons unknown to officers, the Youth Football team have been granted a 50% reduction in calculated annual fees for the use of pitches. Members may wish to continue with this option.

AGENDA ITEM 8

27. Members may agree to one of the options proposed for pitch fees or they may wish to bring forward their own proposal .
28. It is proposed that Members recommend to Full Council the proposed licences put before them with any amendments they may wish to see included.

**Julie Earp
Deputy Town Clerk
February 2023**