

Report of the Interim Strategic Director

BOWLING GREENS1. Purpose of report

To advise members of the impact the very hot and dry summer has had on the Borough Council's bowling greens.

2. Background

There are seven bowling greens maintained by the Borough Council. These are detailed in the appendix.

Historically automatic irrigation systems installed at the bowling greens had not been popular with the bowlers as they created 'heavy' greens that were difficult to play on. In January 2017, as part of a review of the Parks revenue budgets, Cabinet took the decision, in line with users' experiences, to remove the automatic irrigation systems at the bowling greens and take out the granular fertiliser application programme. The decision was seen as a "win win" with a cost saving of £13,800 and faster bowling greens. In summer 2017 the revised programme, with manual watering when necessary and liquid fertiliser, worked and the greens performed well.

In summer 2018, however, with the prolonged hot and dry weather, the manual watering systems were not effective and following advice from Severn Trent to minimise the use of water, the greens became very dry with extensive wear.

In August, after contacting the bowls clubs the decision was made to close the greens three weeks early on Monday, 10 September. The impact of this decision and the works now being undertaken are detailed in the appendix.

3. Financial implications

It has been estimated that the additional cost to undertake the remedial works will be in the region of £17,000. This cannot be contained within the existing revenue budgets for Beeston, Eastwood and Stapleford Parks.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the decision taken to close the bowling green early and to be RECOMMEND to the Finance and Resources Committee that the restoration works are funded from outside existing budgets.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX

Broxtowe Borough Council Maintained Bowling Greens

- Beeston – Broadgate Park and Beeston Fields Recreation Ground
- Chilwell – Inham Nook Recreation Ground
- Eastwood – Coronation Park
- Stapleford – Hickings Lane Recreation Ground and Queen Elizabeth Park
- Toton – Manor Farm Recreation Ground

The bowls season traditional runs from 1 May – 30 September. Closing the greens early has created a longer window of opportunity to undertake the remedial works at a time which is much more favourable for grass seed germination and new growth.

The wear on the greens and areas of dead grass is significantly beyond anything seen in previous years. There are also areas of settlement that will require addressing. Closing the greens 3 weeks early has allowed a major renovation programme to commence to make sure the greens are fit for use in summer 2019. This has required additional specialist equipment to be hired and increased expenditure on top dressing, fertiliser, seed and wetting agent.

Most of the works are being undertaken with the Council's fine turf team but a specialist contractor is required for more extensive works at Coronation Park, where an area of the green has dropped and at Queen Elizabeth Park, Stapleford, Beeston Fields Recreation Ground, Beeston and Manor Farm Recreation Ground, Toton where more major works to repair the ends of the green and to replace the edging boards are required.

The clubs were generally supportive of the decision acknowledging that this summer had been the hottest on record in England and recognising that doing nothing would have a significant impact on the 2019 season. They worked with the Council to try to complete all matches and club competitions in advance of the early closure date. Whilst it is impossible to predict the weather in future seasons, based on previous experience, this renovation work caused by the hot, dry weather is seen as a 'one off'.

The two greens receiving the most criticism are:

- Coronation Park where one corner of the green has settled, a problem that started in 2017 but has increased in 2018 with the very dry weather.
- Queen Elizabeth Park, Stapleford where the edging boards have failed leaving areas on the green unsafe. All the edges of the green now need lifting, re-levelling and new boards installing. Whilst the long hot summer is not entirely responsible it has contributed with the ground drying out and the edges sinking.

Estimated Costs:

Beeston Greens (Beeston/Chilwell/Toton)	£6,000
Eastwood Green	£4,000
Stapleford Greens	£7,000

	£17,000