

Full Council

Title:	Cut & Collect Mower
Date:	10 August 2021
Contact Officer:	Andrea Oughton, Asset Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree to lease or purchase a new mower with the facility to 'cut and collect'.

Background

2. In spring this year, the Town Council agreed to change the grass cutting regime on identified sites within the parish to cultivate greener / wildflower meadow areas. Grass cuts on these sites will take place twice a year in March and September (exact dates being weather dependent).
3. This is a joint project with members of Thame Green Living, signage has been placed on the majority of the sites explaining the change in management and encouraging people to get involved.
4. For wilding areas to flourish, the arisings from both the spring and late summer cuts need to be removed from site. The Town Council do not have a mower with this capability.
5. A demonstration of an Iseki SXG 326+ ride on cut and collect mower was arranged following discussions with Chesham Town Council, who undertook a similar 'greening / wilding' project four years ago. Chesham Town Council also tested the John Deere and Kubota models and found the Iseki to be the better machine to undertake the work required. Since leasing the machine Chesham Town Council have found the mower to be very versatile and use it in a variety of areas, general grass cutting, cutting in the cemetery and churchyard, as well as the twice a year cut to their greening areas.
6. The mower will be used to cut other grassed areas during the cutting season between March and late October. When required it can provide a pristine cut.
7. A report was presented to Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee for their consideration on 20 July 2021. After discussion it was agreed that additional information was required to make an informed decision and a report be submitted to Full Council.

Quotations

8. Three quotations to lease or purchase a machine, together with additional costs including servicing and warranty, etc., are provided in Appendix 1.

Hire Charges

9. The possibility of hiring a 'cut and collect' mower for the twice year cut to the greening areas has been explored.

10. A locally based hire company hire a 'cut and collect' mower at a cost of £220 per day (including delivery and collection charges) or £415 per 5 days (including delivery and collection charges). There is a high demand for the mower and the company recommends booking well in advance.
11. The mower for hire is not registered for road use and would need to be transported to each site. The Town Council does not have a trailer or ramps suitable to transport the mower.
12. Operationally, cutting the greening areas is weather dependent and ideally done when the grass is dry, so flower heads / seeds drop to the ground as the grass is cut and collected. It would be a gamble, having to book a machine well in advance of when it was needed, that the cut would take place in ideal weather conditions.
13. Chesham Town Council are unable to hire their Iseki as it is against the terms of their lease agreement.

Resource Appraisal

14. There is no budget in 2021-22 for greening / biodiversity projects. The recommendation is to lease a cut and collect mower using funds from the Localism Fund and to agree a budget for 2022-23 onwards to cover monthly leasing costs.
15. Leasing allows machinery to be kept up to date, being changed every 3 or 4 years, or returned if no longer required, dependent on the lease term.

Risk Assessment

16. Without the necessary equipment It will not be possible to manage the identified areas to cultivate wildflower meadows.

Legal Powers

- The local Government Act 1972, s101.

Recommendation:

- i) To approve to lease an Iseki SXG 326+ ride on cut and collect mower for a period of 48 months, initially funded from the Localism Fund and included in budgets from 2022-23.***