

**Agenda Item No:** 6 **Report No:** 131/13  
**Report Title:** Leisure Buildings Repairs Reserve – Parks and Cemeteries  
**Report To:** Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 5 September 2013  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Tony Nicholson  
**Ward(s) Affected:** All  
**Report By:** Director of Planning and Environmental Services  
**Contact Officer(s)-**

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### **Purpose of Report:**

To consider the operation of the Leisure Buildings Repairs Reserve and the requirements of the budget within the Parks and Cemeteries Section.

### **Officers Recommendation(s):**

- 1 To note the report and make any recommendations concerning the budget.

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1 At a previous meeting, the Scrutiny Committee requested that a report be brought to a future meeting, outlining details of the Leisure Buildings Repairs Reserve, in particular the size of the reserve and its operation.

### **Information**

- 2 The Leisure Buildings Repairs Reserve
  - 2.1 The Leisure Buildings Repairs Reserve exists to provide funding for works to facilities, parks and open spaces managed by the Council. The necessity for the Reserve and the balance held within it is reviewed by Cabinet twice a year (in advance of budget setting and following accounts closure). This indicates that the annual contribution to the Reserve was reduced by £17,000 for 2011/2012 as a contribution to the

Council's overall savings target. In January 2013 Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of all reserves and made observations to Cabinet.

- 2.2** Each financial year, a contribution is made to the Reserve so as to maintain it at a level appropriate in meeting future demand. Movements on the reserve for each of the past three years is shown below:

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
	£	£	£	
Balance b/fwd	113	117	126	113
Add Contribution	67	50	50	50
Available	180	167	176	163
Used:				
• Parks & Open Spaces	45	41	53	45
• Cemeteries	6	-	-	10
• Car Parks	12	-	10	12
Total Used	63	41	63	67
Balance c/fwd	117	126	113	96

Source: Statement of Accounts/Annual Financial Report 2010/2011-2012/2013 & the Revenue Budget for 2013/2014.

- 2.3** Some maintenance works tend to be cyclical, and holding a reserve enables spending to take place other than on an annual cycle, with the costs by way of annual contribution being consistent between years.
- 2.4** The methodology is widely used throughout local government given the beneficial effect of providing for spending which although likely cannot be forecast with certainty. Maintaining a Reserve enables spending to take place with the assurance that resources are available to cover that spending.

### **3 Services Supported**

- 3.1** The Parks and Cemeteries Service fall within District Services, within the Planning and Environmental Services Directorate. It is responsible for looking after 185 hectares of parks, formal gardens, open spaces, sports pitches, cemeteries, closed churchyards etc, as well as a further 250 hectares of environmental and common land areas.
- 3.2** Maintenance works carried out by the Parks and Cemeteries Section includes:

- Annual Bedding Plant Displays

- Maintenance of fine turf such as 3 bowling greens, 5 cricket wickets and 2 grass tennis courts
- The day to day maintenance and cleaning of sports pavilions and changing rooms
- Grounds maintenance of car parks
- Grass cutting of over 92 hectares of grass
- The maintenance and operation of 3 cemeteries (Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford) including approximately 140 burials and 90 internment of ashes per year.
- The maintenance and inspection of 32 children's play areas
- Grounds maintenance of 7 closed churchyards
- Sensitive grounds maintenance of Nature Reserves and environmental areas
- The maintenance of hard surfaced tennis courts
- Winter sports maintenance of football and rugby pitches
- The maintenance of hedges and shrub beds across the district
- Managing the booking and allocation of sports pitches across the district
- The collection of litter from over 90,000m<sup>2</sup> of parks and open spaces as well as emptying over 70 litter bins in parks and open spaces.
- The sweeping of over 50,000m<sup>2</sup> of paths every two weeks.

**3.3** In order to carry out this maintenance, the Parks and Cemeteries Section has a number of budgets to cover regular, specified works that occur year on year. However, there are often "one off" maintenance, repair or replacement works that are required. These works will often be paid for through the Building Maintenance Reserve. Works paid for from this budget have to be non routine and relate to maintenance of existing land, buildings and associated works, for example the application or renewal of parking bay markings in parking areas.

**3.4** For budgetary purposes, an estimate is made at the start of the financial year as to the likely cost of works to be financed from the Reserve.

**3.5** The Building Maintenance Reserve budget available is split across relevant service areas, although this can be used flexibly within the year.

Parks and Open Spaces: £45,000

Cemeteries: £10,000

Car Parking £12,000

**3.6** The analysis set out as Appendix 1 shows how the 2012/2013 budget for Parks & Open Spaces was utilised during the financial year. The analysis shows that the majority of the funding from the Leisure Buildings Repairs Reserve goes towards resurfacing of paths, gates and fencing. This particular year also included the construction of new ashes plots at Lewes Cemetery and the refurbishment of sports changing facilities at the Eastside Recreation Ground in Newhaven.

### **3.7 Children's Play Equipment**

The Reserve is also used for the replacement of damaged, vandalised or old children's play equipment. The spreadsheet shows that for the financial year 2012/13 a relatively small amount was allocated for this (£3,721). This is primarily due to having had good funding streams from the National Lottery and the Government over previous years, allowing many play areas to be upgraded. However these funding streams ceased several years ago and there is now no specific budget in place for the replacement of play equipment, which can be very expensive. The replacement and upgrading of play areas is now reliant on Sec 106 monies becoming available from Developer Contributions. However these funds are undeterminable and typically can only be used for specific projects in the vicinity of new developments. It is anticipated that as play equipment becomes older, significant strain will be placed on the Reserve.

## **4 Financial Appraisal**

Maintenance of the Reserve ensures that there are finances available to pay for spending not covered by the service revenue budget, and helps streamline costs between years.

If the Reserve was no longer maintained, there would be increased pressure on the recurring base budget for these services. Transfers for other service budgets would be required.

Because spending may be reasonably expected to arise, but the exact amount and timing is uncertain, the maintenance of such a Reserve represents good practice. This may be likened to self-assurance, where periodic contributions are made to a fund from which large, unforeseeable costs may be financed at some future, uncertain date.

The practice is a good one in that it ensures that provision is made to pay for future costs which cannot be forecast with any certainty, and provides stability to costs which underlie the level of local taxes to be levied.

**5 Legal Implications**

None

**6 Sustainability Implications**

I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report/budget monitoring report.

**7 Equality Screening**

I have completed the initial Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise and have identified no negative impacts arising from this Report. Therefore, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

**8 Background Papers**

None

**9 Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Parks & Open Spaces Spending Financed by the Leisure Buildings Reserve, 2012/2013

## Appendix 1

### Parks & Open Spaces Spending Financed by the Leisure Buildings Reserve, 2012/2013

<i>Category</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Committed</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Play	Budget allocation for play renewals	£3,721.00	Used to repair and replace items of play equipment
Paths	Tarmacing at Lewes Cem / Lewes Bowls and Walmer Rd	£2,600.00	
Misc	Check Abseiling points on Cliff Tops	£556.00	Structural Engineer safety testing of abseiling points prior to use by public
Play	Mono Hinge gate repairs	£1,300.00	
Misc	Newhaven Fort Water Storage	£2,950.00	Providing water harvesting for irrigation
Paths	Tarmac Downs Rec car Park	£2,720.00	
Building Main	Eastside Rec Port a cabin refurb	£3,285.00	Sports changing rooms
Paths	Repairs to surface of Red House Common Car Park	£3,420.00	
Paths	Resurfacing work - Red House Common	£6,000.00	
Paths	Kerbing works Lewes Cem	£410.00	
Building Main	Repairs to bridges - Malling	£175.00	Old Uckfield Railway Line
Building Main	Bridge Inspection	£500.00	Old Uckfield Railway Line
Cem plots	Construct new Ashes Plots at Lewes	£4,221.20	
Misc	Repair Knee rail fencing at Lewes Cemetery & Huggets Green / West Quay & check existing fencing.	£375.00	
Paths	Path construction at Seaford cemetery	£600.00	
Paths	Lift and relay level brick paving area at the Grange Gardens	£400.00	
Paths	Resurfacing work to footpaths at Railway Land.	£4,700.00	
Paths	Re laying of Grange patio	£14,999.08	Refurbishment of Southover Grange Terrace
Paths	Resurfacing work to repair footpath at The promenade Peacehaven	£1,600.00	

**TOTAL: £54,532.28**