

Review of Charges for Six Acres

The Land known as Six Acres purchased by Wickhambrook Parish Council in 1974.

After a period when the area, including the pavilion and tennis courts was managed by the Memorial Social Centre, the responsibility was handed back to Wickhambrook Parish Council in 2003. At this stage, agreements were drawn up between the Parish Council and the various users of the land to safeguard the Parish Council's assets and to provide a semi-formal framework within which all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The agreements were set for periods of one year and have been renewed annually.

The rents stated in the agreement(s) were set at a peppercorn level at this time. The agreements allow for the rent to be reviewed and agreed between the parties before the renewal of the agreement (Sample agreement attached as **Appendix A**).

The agreements also state that the Parish Council shall not be liable for repair, maintenance or upkeep of the facility. Notwithstanding this, the Parish Council has paid for mowing of the Recreation Ground (over the past 3 financial years), and maintenance of the hedges and banks to the Bowls Club (since 2019/20) and cutting of grass around the tennis courts.

The charges were last reviewed in 2020. Wickhambrook Parish Council's Financial Standing Orders oblige the Parish Council to review the charges annually. Any change to the charges would need to be in agreement with the parties (usually before a renewal of the agreement).

The financial income and expenditure for Six Acres/Recreation Ground appears to be:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 (Budgeted)
Income	-£20.00	-£50.00	-£50.00	-£30.00
Expenditure				
Grounds Contract	£2,935.20	£4,800.00	£3120.00	£4200.00
Other	£45.00	£10.00		
Trees		£180.00	£180.00	£270.00
Water	£992.84	£99.54	£147.96	£150.00
Total	£2,980.20	£5089.54	£3447.96	£4620.00
Cost	£2,950.20	£5039.54	£3397.96	£4590.00
Reserves	£2,000.00	£2,500.00	£2,500.00	£2,500.00

Since the last review, the clerk has followed up on the actions identified, and

- Undertaken a review and specification for Ground Works which identifies specific areas (e.g. Six Acres, Bowling Green, Tennis Courts – mowing) to better monitor costs;
- Mapped works to Trees which can be drilled down to specific areas of the Parish

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
August 2022

- An understanding of the reach of each organisation with whom the Parish Council has an agreement for use of Six Acres. It is recognised that many clubs in the parish have struggled over time to attract and maintain memberships (the Adult Football team has now closed down) and falling membership impacts on their costs and reserves.

Any increase in charges which would reduce the overall cost to the parish council is likely to place a disproportionate burden on small clubs in the parish, which make a significant contribution to the health and well being of residents of the parish.

The parish council has powers to provide

- and maintain land for public recreation (Public Health Act 1875, s.164)
- manage recreation grounds, public walks, pleasure grounds and open spaces (Public Health Act 1875, s.164)
- sports facilities and staff in or outside of the council's area or contribute towards the expenses of any voluntary organisation or local authority that provides sports facilities etc. in or outside of the council's area (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19)

The parish also has powers to donate to organisations (Local Government Act 1976 s.137) up to certain limits (£8.82 per elector). The parish had 1012 electors at the last registration (equivalent to £8925.84).

Actions:

The committee is asked to consider any increase in charges (effective in the next financial year) for the parish council to approve in its next budget.

The net cost(s) of grounds maintenance (including work to trees) be recorded as grant(s) in kind for relevant clubs and organisations under s.137.