

# GRASS CUTTING – BLETSOE PLAYING FIELD

This is a study into the viability of the community of Bletsoe together with Bletsoe Parish Council replacing the current contractual arrangement of seasonal grass cutting of Bletsoe playing field by Bedford Borough Council, by the purchase of a suitable ride on mower.

Bletsoe village has 6 distinct areas which require the seasonal cutting of grass.

- 1) Highway grass verges within 30 mph. Cut by BBC.
- 2) Churchyard. Managed by PCC. Financial contribution from PC. Cut by 2 separate contractors and volunteers.
- 3) Memorial gardens. Cut by a volunteer.
- 4) Orchard. Presently cut by volunteers on temporary basis. Probably Contractor.
- 5) Fenced children's play area. Cut by contractor.
- 6) Playing field. Cut by contractor.

This studies focus is on area 6, Bletsoe playing field. However, the reader should be aware of the potential benefits a community owned mower could have in areas 2,3 and 4.

Bletsoe playing field measures between 25,000 and 27,000 sq. metres (6 to 6.6 acres) in total. Removing the areas of long grass, wild flowers, trees and hard standing play area, the mowed grass areas measure some 20,000 to 22,000 sq. metres (5 to 5.5 acres).

The following criteria has been used to arrive at the most suitable mower type.

- It has to be capable of mowing the field, taking into account its dips and hollows, within a reasonable time.
- It needs to be capable of collecting grass cuttings from time to time when specific events on the field require this facility (fete weddings etc.).
- There are no facilities to continually collect the grass clippings from the field so a mulching device would be needed.
- It needs to be reasonably simple to operate given that it is to be used by community volunteers.
- It needs to be reasonably simple and cost effective to maintain.
- Its physical size needs to be considered with respect to storage and access to areas to be mowed.
- The mowing equipment must be able to "pay for itself" by savings, within 5 years.

Having also sort professional advice (P. Tuckwells Ltd.) both on the type and size of the equipment needed, together with volunteers own experience, the following mower has been chosen to use in this study.

CLUB CADEY XT3 QS137 ENDURO SERIES 137cm/54" Side Discharge Hydrostatic Lawn Tractor.

It incorporates a decent size engine, a large deck with mulching device as standard and is capable of mowing 5000 sq. metres an hour and a collector bag can be added.

It cost £4,699 for the machine and £429 for the collecting bag (total £5,128 incl. VAT) with a 3 year warranty. To make using it simpler it can continue to mow whilst in reverse.

The full details can be found at this web site.

<http://www.thegreenreaper.co.uk/lawn-tractors/side-discharge-mulching-lawn-tractors/cub-cadet-xt3-qs137-enduro-series-lawn-tractor>

The details of the collection bag can be found here

<http://www.thegreenreaper.co.uk/cub-cadet-19a30018100-triple-bag>

A trade magazine review.

<http://prolandscapermagazine.com/maximum-strength-and-power-for-new-lawn-tractors-from-cub-cadet/>

#### **COSTS**

Club Cadet Mower	5128
Shed for storage	3000
Contingency approx. 10%	800
TOTAL	<u>8928</u>

#### **ANNUAL RUNNING COSTS**

Fuel	200
Maintenance	150
Insurance (unknown at present)*	
TOTAL	<u>350</u>

#### **ANNUAL USE**

14 cuts at 6 hours per cut	84 hours
----------------------------	----------

#### **LIFE EXPENTANCY OF MOWER**

2000 HOURS	23.8 years
------------	------------

#### **PROPOSAL**

The current cost of Bedford Borough Council's 14 cuts per annum is £1690. Therefore, the proposal would be that Bletsoe Parish Council purchase the mower together with a storage shed. Community volunteers would then take on the grass cutting of the playing field, saving the Parish Council £1690 per annum less running costs. Over a 4 year period this saving would amount to £6760 which would recover the initial cost of the mower and running costs, and that it would take just over 6 years of savings, £10140, to recover the cost of the mower, running costs AND shed. After year 4 the PC would have the asset of the mower, the initial outgoing (money) returned by way of savings and all future savings, that is £1690 per annum less running costs for the remaining life of mower. This could be a considerable sum to add to the facilities and upkeep of the communities playing field.

## FUNDING

There are 3 possible options to funding this proposal.

- 1) Parish Council reserve.
- 2) Community Infrastructure Levey - Ronda, Rushden Road. 16/02897/FUL.
- 3) Mixture of both option 1 and 2.

P.A. Vine 8/8/17

\*Please note, Bletsoe Parish Council to advise on potential cost of insuring the mower equipment. Therefore, none of the savings quoted above have included this cost.