

Report: Replacement of WSSA Tractor

Purpose of the Report

To consider a request from the Trustees of Wem Sports and Social Association (WSSA) to approve, in principle, the replacement of the existing tractor rather than the large mower, and to authorise the use of earmarked machinery reserves (funded by the Town Council) for this purpose.

Trustees resolved to approve this proposal on at its meeting 5 February 2026, subject to Town Council agreement as the primary funder of WSSA's machinery reserve.

Background

WSSA maintains major grounds maintenance equipment on behalf of the town and has historically operated a rolling replacement programme, renewing large machinery approximately every five years to ensure reliability and value for money.

The Town Council contributes £7,000 annually toward machinery reserves. All current machinery reserves derive from these Town Council contributions.

Review of Existing Equipment

Ransomes Mower

The large Ransomes mower is now over five years old. Trade-in values obtained ranged between £5,000 and £8,000, with replacement costs exceeding £30,000.

The mower remains fully operational and fit for purpose across the town's open spaces. The Groundsman's professional assessment is that the trade-in value represents poor value and that retention of the mower at this stage is financially prudent.

Tractor – Massey Ferguson 3707 AL

The tractor is six years old and operational. However, limitations have been identified in relation to:

- Safe storage and transportation of tools and PPE
- Operator comfort and safety when travelling on public roads

Currently, equipment is transported in the trailer alongside litter and waste materials, as there is no suitable secure storage within the cab. This presents a health and safety concern.

Proposed Replacement

Trustees propose replacing the existing tractor with a Massey Ferguson 3AL 85 model, specified to include:

- Front linkage and front-mounted work box (approx. £2,000 additional cost) to enable safe and secure transportation of tools and PPE
- Suspension system to improve operator comfort and safety when travelling on uneven road surfaces and highways

These features would address current health and safety limitations and improve working conditions.

Cost Control and Value for Money

To minimise capital expenditure:

- Specialist tyres from the existing tractor would be transferred to the new machine
- The existing tractor would be offered as part-exchange
- Three indicative quotations have been obtained
- Fully updated quotations, including confirmed trade-in valuations, would be sought prior to any final commitment

The estimated upgrade cost is approximately £31,000 inclusive of part-exchange.

Financial Position

- Current earmarked machinery reserves: £32,800.
- 2025–26 WSSA equipment underspend: £8,300 (available to earmark at year end)
- 2026–27 Town Council contribution due: £7,000

The proposal can therefore be met from existing and planned machinery reserves without additional unbudgeted contribution from the Town Council.

Governance Considerations

As all machinery reserves derive from Town Council funding, it is appropriate that the Town Council formally approves the use of those reserves for replacement of major equipment.

No contractual commitment is sought at this stage. Approval is requested in principle to proceed to the stage of obtaining final quotations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to

1. **Endorse the Trustees' view that replacing the tractor represents better value for money at this time than replacing the mower.**
2. **Confirm their support, in principle, for the use of earmarked machinery reserves for the replacement of the tractor and to note that formal quotations will be obtained by the Secretary before any purchase is made by WSSA.**
3. **Determine such other action as Members consider appropriate.**