Agenda Item 26/27/219

Sturminster Newton Town Council

Business Case and Value-for-Money Report
Proposed Purchase of the Stage 5 Multifunction Machine







Purpose of the Report

This report sets out the operational and financial case for purchasing a Stage 5 multifunction machine and associated attachments. The purpose is to demonstrate how one adaptable machine could undertake a broad range of grounds-maintenance and cleansing duties, reduce reliance on separate specialist machines, improve productivity and provide good long-term value for the Council.

Stage 5 multifunction machine — Machine Specification

The Stage 5 multifunction machine is a commercial four-wheel-drive front mower designed for demanding grounds-maintenance work. It combines high-capacity cut-and-collect performance with hydraulic controls, compact manoeuvrability and compatibility with multiple attachments. The updated quoted configuration includes a 155 cm rotary deck, road lighting and registration, a 160 cm flail mower with scarification blades and collection, and a 130 cm front-mounted sweeper with collection box and side gulley brush.

Specification	Details
Engine	Stage 5 diesel; 2,190 cc; 4 cylinders; 47 hp / 34.3 kW; electric start; liquid cooling; automatic radiator-cleaning system; dry air filter with safety filter and pre-filter.
Fuel capacity	50 litres
Hydraulic oil capacity	25 litres
Transmission and drive	Hydrostatic transmission with four hydraulic motors; permanent 4WD; self-engaging and manual differential lock.
PTO	Hydraulic clutch with cardan-shaft drive to the cutting deck.
Cutting deck	Front-mounted, twin-blade collection deck with gear drive, hydraulic lifting and solid puncture-proof wheels. Quoted configuration: 155 cm rotary deck.
Available cutting widths	152–182 cm, depending on deck specification.
Cutting height	Hydraulically adjustable from 2–12 cm.
Mulching	Mulching kit stated as standard in the machine specification; the updated quotation does not separately itemise the quick-fit blanking plate, so inclusion should be confirmed before ordering.
Collection system	Dual-speed hydraulic loading turbine with powered load distributor.
Collector capacity	1,400 litres
Discharge	Automatic hydraulic opening; maximum discharge height 250 cm; rear projection 50 cm.
Steering and controls	Hydraulic steering; pedal-operated forward and reverse travel; digital display with engine-speed and safety-system monitoring.

Travel speed	0–22 km/h
Inner turning radius	62 cm
Operator seat	Adjustable pneumatic-suspension seat.
Tyres	Front: 24 × 12.00–12 garden; rear: 20 × 10.00–10 garden.
Indicative mowing capacity	Up to 15,500 m^2 per hour.
Dimensions	Length: 281 cm without deck / 364 cm with deck. Width: 138 cm without deck / 162 cm with deck. Height: 199 cm, or 231 cm with roll bar or cab.
Weight	1,385 kg without cutting deck; up to 1,656 kg with deck.
Quoted road equipment	Road lighting kit and road registration included.
Optional attachments	The updated quotation includes a 160 cm flail mower with scarification blades and collection, plus a 130 cm front-mounted sweeper with collection box, mechanical angling and hydraulic side gulley brush. Other attachments remain optional and would require separate pricing.

Proposed Purchase

Item	Purpose
Stage 5 multifunction machine	Core 4WD mower and collection unit for grounds-maintenance operations.
Collection cutting deck	Cutting and collecting amenity grass, longer grass, wildflower meadow arisings and leaves.
Quick-fit blanking plate / mulching arrangement	Allows grass to be cut and mulched where collection is unnecessary, reducing disposal and handling.
160 cm flail mower with scarification blades and collection	Management and collection of rougher vegetation and meadow arisings, plus scarification and renovation work.
130 cm front-mounted sweeper	130 cm sweeping width, 45 cm brush diameter, collection box, mechanical angling, and a 40 cm hydraulically driven side gulley brush with speed control, storage position and collision protection.

Operational Benefits

- **One machine for multiple duties:** amenity mowing, cut-and-collect work, wildflower meadow management, leaf collection, mulching, flailing, scarifying and sweeping.
- **Seasonal utilisation:** mowing and meadow work during the growing season, leaf collection in autumn, scarification and renovation when required, and sweeping throughout the year.

- **Flexible grass management:** operators can quickly change between collecting and mulching to suit the site, weather, available time and desired finish.
- **Improved site coverage:** the machine could be deployed across parks, open spaces, cemetery areas, verges, car parks and other suitable Council-managed sites.
- **High-capacity collection:** the 1,400-litre collector and high-tip discharge arrangement should reduce unloading frequency and support efficient transfer into a vehicle or designated disposal point.
- **Manoeuvrability and access:** four-wheel drive, compact turning circle and front-mounted attachments support work around obstacles and on varied ground conditions.
- **Operator efficiency:** hydraulic controls, adjustable cutting height, powered collection and a suspended seat should improve ease of use during extended operations.

Value-for-Money Case

The principal value-for-money benefit is consolidation. The Council has already identified a need for sweeping capability. Purchasing a separate dedicated sweeper as well as a mower would mean two capital purchases, two machines to insure, store, maintain and service, and potentially two sets of operator training and replacement planning. The proposed multifunction platform offers the opportunity to meet both requirements through one power unit with interchangeable attachments.

- Avoids, or significantly delays, the need to purchase a separate road or site sweeper.
- Spreads the capital cost across several services and a wider range of annual operating hours.
- Reduces duplication in servicing, storage, insurance, transport and staff familiarisation.
- Provides greater resilience because the same base machine can be reconfigured as seasonal workloads change.
- May reduce contractor hire and machinery-hire costs for meadow cutting, scarification, leaf collection and sweeping.
- Allows arisings to be collected where removal is required, while mulching can be used elsewhere to reduce handling, transport and disposal.
- Supports more work being completed in-house, giving the Council greater control over timing, standards and response to changing conditions.

Best value quote

Cost or saving	Amount / evidence
Base machine and cutting/collection equipment	**£41,630.00 excluding VAT** — base machine with 155 cm rotary cut-and-collect deck, road lighting kit and road registration.
Blanking plate / mulching equipment	Standard mulching kit and quick-fit blanking arrangement are supplied.
Flail head with scarifier	160 cm flail mower with scarification blades and collection: (retail £7,739.00) quote price £6,679.00 excluding VAT.
Sweeper kit and any road-use equipment	130 cm front-mounted sweeper: (retail £7,435.00) quoted price £6,845.00 excluding VAT. Road lighting and registration remain included with the base machine.

Delivery, setup and operator training	Confirm delivery charge. Setup and operator training are included.
Total proposed capital cost	**£55,154.00 excluding VAT**

Quote 2 £58,235.00

Quote 3 £57,445.00

Expected service life, resale value and annualised cost: With appropriate servicing, maintenance and safe operation, the Council expects the machine and attachments to remain in productive service for approximately 7–10 years, subject to differing attachment wear and replacement needs. Based on the updated package price of £55,154.00 excluding VAT, the equivalent capital cost is approximately £7,879 per year over seven years or £5,515 per year over ten years, before servicing, repairs, fuel or replacement consumables. If the existing estimated resale value of £12,000 is achieved after ten years, the net capital cost would be approximately £43,154, equivalent to around £4,315 per year. The wider quoted package strengthens the operational case by providing priced mowing, collection, flailing, scarification and sweeping capability, but attachment condition and resale value should be reviewed separately.

Finance Option for Comparison

The existing finance illustration is for the earlier £41,630.00 machine-and-deck selling price only. It does not finance the £13,524.00 quoted selling price of the flail mower and sweeper. It is therefore retained as a machine-only comparison and must not be treated as finance for the complete £55,154.00 package. All figures in the illustration are exclusive of VAT.

Finance detail	Finance provider example
Financial product	Hire Purchase / Conditional Sale
Reference	Withheld for confidentiality
Equipment selling price	£41,630.00 excluding VAT
Deposit	£4,163.00
Administration fee	£125.00
Balance financed	£37,467.00
APR	7.80%
Monthly payment	£578.47
Repayment period	83 monthly payments, from November 2026 to September 2033
Total finance charges	£10,671.01
Total payable under finance	**£52,301.01 excluding VAT**

Additional cost compared with outright purchase	£10,671.01 excluding VAT

For the machine-only amount, the finance option would preserve more of the Council's available capital and provide a predictable monthly cost, but would add £10,671.01 compared with paying £41,630.00 outright. If the Council wishes to finance the complete updated package, it should obtain a revised illustration based on £55,154.00 excluding VAT; the current monthly payment, finance charges and total payable cannot be applied to the attachments.

Service and Environmental Benefits

- Supports a varied mowing regime, including formal amenity grass and cut-and-collect management of wildflower areas.
- Collection of meadow arisings can help reduce soil fertility over time where this forms part of the agreed ecological management approach.
- Mulching provides an alternative on appropriate sites and can reduce the volume of material transported away.
- Leaf collection from open spaces, car parks and other suitable locations can improve presentation, reduce blocked drainage risks and maintain safer access routes.
- Sweeping capability could improve the Council's ability to respond to seasonal debris and local cleansing priorities without bringing in a second specialist machine.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council approve the outright purchase of the Stage 5 multifunction machine and associated flail mower and sweeper attachments at the quoted price of £55,154.00 excluding VAT, subject to confirmation of any delivery charge, and availability of the necessary budget. The proposed package offers a versatile solution for grounds maintenance and cleansing, with the potential to reduce the need for separate specialist machinery and provide long-term value for money.