Report title	Automated Lawn Mower
Report author	Helen Wilson, Deputy Green Spaces Manager
Department	Green Spaces, Environmental Services
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	N/A
Reasons for exemption	N/A

Purpose of report:

To resolve

Synopsis of report:

This report was requested under SO27.4 (d)

Information on the potential benefits and drawbacks of automated lawn mower use on Englefield Green and reference to trials conducted in other authorities.

Recommendation(s):

The suggested use of automate mowers on Englefield Green be rejected based on the vulnerability to interference by the public in this location.

1. Context and background of report

1.1 This suggestion was brought to Cllr. Gates by a committee member of Englefield Green Cricket Club introduced by Mr McGregor-Johnston, the report was then requested under SO27.4 (d).

2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended

- 2.1 In recent years, the use of automated lawn mowers has gained popularity for maintaining lawns. These machines operate autonomously, following pre -programmed routes and schedules.
- 2.2 The selling points are that the mowers can work continuously, resulting in a well -maintained appearance throughout the year.
- 2.3 These machines are powered by electricity, reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and minimizing carbon emissions and utilize sensors to detect obstacles.
- 2.4 The very small clippings are left to feed the grass and not removed from site.

- 2.5 Commercial automated mowers retail at around £3,000-£6,000 although further research would need to be conducted to establish the full set up costs.
- 2.6 Concerns around the use of automated mowers in public open spaces such as Englefield Green arise around the buried boundary wire, potential for theft, vandalism, and the ongoing maintenance requirements for the machines.
- 2.7 While the mowers can be tracked with GPS and are fitted with alarms, the likelihood for interference from the public is high, particularly as Englefield Green is so visible to passers-by and not enclosed in any way.
- 2.8 While automated mowers are often used in golf clubs, college campuses and private gardens, their use in public open space appears limited.
- 2.9 Edinburgh City Council employed auto-mowers following a trial in 2017 that included their very steep, fenced site at the Edinburgh Mound.
- 2.10 East Devon City Council has trialled auto-mowers in 2019 in Manor Gardens and Withycombe Pitches in Exmouth and at All Hallows in Honiton.
- 2.11 There do not seem to be published results from these trials, although this could be requested.

3. Policy framework implications

3.1 The adoption of automated mowers would comply with our Climate Change Policy.

4 Resource implications/Value for Money

4.1 Acquisition, use, maintenance and insurance of automated mowers at this location would be funded from Englefield Green earmarked reserves.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 None.
- 6. Equality implications
- 6.1 None

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 Lower carbon emissions, electric mowers.

8. **Risk Implications**

8.1 The risk that the automated mower would be stolen is high. A full risk assessment would need to be undertaken prior to the auto-mowers use.

9. Other implications (where applicable)

9.1 None

10. Timetable for Implementation

10.1 N/A

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 There are no results from our research to support the use of automated mowers in the location.
- 12. Background papers
- 12.1 None
- 13. Appendices
- 13.1 None