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| Meeting | Policy & Finance |
| Date of meeting | 13 th May 2026 |
| Briefing Item | Wellington Tennis Club Lease |
| Author and email address | Alice Kendall – Democratic Services & Finance Manager alice@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk |

1. Context

This briefing note provides background information relating to the request from the Wellington Tennis Club to consider the matter of its rent.

2. Briefing

The e-mail from the Chair of the Tennis Club refers to varying amounts paid by other sports clubs via leases with the Council which were inherited when the properties were devolved from Somerset Council. The table below compares rent review arrangements and the amounts involved.

| Club | Opening Year | Initial Rent | Rent Review Formula | Current Rent | Review Period |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------------|---|--------------|--------------------------|
| Tennis Club | 2019 | £1,763.14 | (RPI in review month * current rent) / Base RPI | £5,372.35 | Yearly |
| Football Club | 2018 | £1,350 | (RPI in review month * initial rent) / Base RPI | £1,874 | 3-yearly (next Oct 2027) |
| Cricket Club | 2014 | £1,250 in yr 1, 2 & 3 | (RPI in review month * initial rent) / Base RPI | £2,257 | 5-yearly (next Apr 2029) |

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| | | £1,500 in Yr 3, 4 and 5 | NB – initial rent in this agreement is the higher £1,500 amount | | |
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In each lease, the Base RPI is the RPI figure for a specified month in the commencement year. These calculations usually mean that rental increases in line with inflation.

The Town Council has not been given any background information on how the terms in these leases were negotiated, or if the tenant parties undertook independent legal advice. It is unclear why the calculation in the Tennis Club's lease differs of that from the Cricket and Football Club.

Sometime after the Town Council had taken over the leases, it was discovered that Somerset Council had not reviewed rents at the appropriate time. Each of the leases includes "time not being of essence" clauses meaning that any back rent is immediately payable by the tenant on demand. As a gesture of good will, and on a without prejudice basis, I did not demand that the balance on the updated rental amount be paid immediately but would be charged at the next billing point. This amounted to the following:

- Tennis Club – £1,741 difference,
- Cricket Club - £379 difference, and
- Football Club - £182 difference

If the Committee consider any changes to any leases, it is my advice that it must be administered through the Council's solicitors which will incur fees. And, that other parties are strongly advised to undertake their own legal advice, for which they will be responsible for the fees of.

3. Background Papers

3.1. Correspondence from Tennis Club

3.2. Leases available on request

To: Dave Farrow <dave@wellingtontowncouncil.co.uk>

Subject: Wellington Tennis Club's Lease/Ground rent

Dear Dave,

I'm grateful to your colleague Alice and Cllr Wheatley for exploring the historic background to the very different rents payable by the three Wellington sports clubs that are tenants at the Playing Field.

The figures below illustrate the stark financial differentials:

- Tennis - £1,763.14 in 2019 - currently £5,372
- Football - £1,350 in 2018 - currently £1,847
- Cricket - £1,500 in 2014 - currently £2,257

When we had the third court built, we had to change the lease. It was also at a time when Somerset County Council were going through the first merger and it was chaos.

The tennis club understands the compounding effects of RPI increases on our particular lease compared to the other two clubs. However, from any objective view it hardly seems fair or equitable that the smallest club should be paying almost three times as much rent as the largest.

I'd like to formally request that the town council's Policy & Finance committee considers the matter at its May meeting in the hope of finding a fairer solution.

Best wishes

Sue Rackley

Chair