

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee	26 th November 2012
Subject: Fees and Charges Report	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Decision
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for a range of facilities and services provided at Hampstead Heath for 2013/14.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>That Committee approves the proposed fees and charges for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park 2013/14 as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.</p>	

Main Report

Introduction

1. Charges for the wide range of recreation and sporting facilities that are provided in all the City's open spaces are traditionally reviewed annually. The current charges for 2012/13 for Hampstead Heath were approved by the Management Committee in November 2011.

Current Position

2. Weather conditions during the summer were very unfavourable, June and July were extremely wet months. Whilst bookings remained consistent across the various sport and recreation activities, a significant number of cancellations were made. As an example at Parliament Hill cricket square games played were 60% down on the previous year. This situation is reflected in other activities and has consequently had a detrimental impact on income generation for some activities.
3. Interestingly, whether the build up and success of the Olympics/ Paralympics or the desire to make the most of the sun when it appeared, but the Lido takings are actually significantly up on the £95,200 taken during the same period in 2011. The few hot days presented very significant crowds which presented its own challenges in being able to effectively resource this facility and the bathing ponds.
4. For the period April – September 2012 inclusive the following income levels have been achieved across sports and recreation facilities:

Facility	Income Budget (£)	Income for period April – September 2012 (exc. VAT) (£)
Athletics Track	15,000	14,200
Cricket	5,000	7,600
Lido	125,000	142,300
Swimming/Bathing Ponds	80,000	34,800
Tennis	37,000	56,300
TOTAL	262,000	255,200

NB. Invoices for rugby and football have been raised but income is recorded for the third and fourth quarter periods.

Proposed Charges for 2013/14

5. Back in 2005 the City introduced revised charges based on a detailed benchmarking survey with other local providers. Whilst fees and charges have been surveyed against other providers since this period, reservations were expressed last year by the Sports Advisory Forum that adopting a pricing policy based solely on benchmarks is too simplistic an approach.
6. Concern was rightly expressed that benchmarking can be a crude measure in setting appropriate fees and charges, lacking sophistication in understanding current usage patterns, quality of service provision and whether prices are actually encouraging or deterring users, particularly from hard to reach groups.
7. Over the past six months the Sports Advisory Forum has undertaken considerable work in starting to analyse some of these complexities. The initial work has focused on developing processes to understand usage patterns for some of the key activities.
8. The Forum is starting to prepare a set of overriding objectives on aspirations for sport and recreation provision across the Heath, supplemented by some underpinning principles to help develop a more sophisticated and flexible charging regime. These objectives and principles will come before this Committee during 2013 for discussion.
9. Another factor that has been considered in developing this year's fees and charges is the success of the Olympics/Paralympics and the noticeable upsurge in interest in sports participation. The Highgate Harriers had an additional 30 members wanting to join their Club after the conclusion of the Games.
10. With growing concern about obesity and healthy lifestyles across all ages, the open spaces have an important role to play in offering opportunities for

people to improve their well-being. This has very much been the focus of our Green to Gold campaign and it is important that we endeavour to build upon the success of this campaign over the next 12 months as part of our legacy activities.

11. In line with discussions at the Hampstead Heath Management Committee the fees and charges for 2012/13 were rounded where appropriate to the nearest 50pence. It has been custom to increase figures by Retail Price Index which is currently fluctuating at around 3%. A view has therefore been taken to retain the lower fees and charges at their current rates for a further 12 months to avoid the problems of having to manage increases of 5p or 10p and to encourage participation in sport following the success of the Olympic/Paralympic Games.
12. The proposed increases in charges for sports and recreational facilities during 2013/14 are set out in Appendix A.

Financial Implications

13. Further works are proposed during 2013 to develop a more sophisticated approach to pricing sports and recreational facilities.

Consultation

14. At the Sports Advisory Forum there was agreement with the proposed approach to adoption of fees and charges for 2013/14 as set out in this report. Concerns were however raised again about the appropriateness of the sports booking systems and whether these tools were sophisticated enough in terms of capturing essential management information to make better informed decisions. A sports booking system for all the City's Open Spaces is currently in the initial stages of development.

Strategic Implications

15. The current management policy plan states at policy 78 that: "recreational facilities will be managed in a way which recognises the right and ability of everyone to use and enjoy the Heath ...". The proposals set out in this report contain a range of charges with concessionary rates which have been assessed against other local providers.
16. The provision of a wide range of recreational and sporting facilities meets the current Business Plan strategic aim of 'promoting opportunities to value and enjoy the outdoors for recreation, learning and healthy living'. Access for all to facilities that help improve fitness and promote healthy lifestyles particularly obesity in young people is an important objective.

Conclusion

17. The proposed sports and recreation fees and charges in this report has been determined by a number of factors, not least the need to harness the current popularity of sports participation arising out of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The development of overriding objectives and principles for sports and recreation provision has commenced.

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