

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Epping Forest & Commons	14 May 2012	
Subject: Epping Forest Sport Charges 2012/13		Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 10/12		For Decision
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report reviews the charges for the sport facilities that are provided at Epping Forest, and seeks approval for the proposed charges for 2012/13.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>I RECOMMEND that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The proposed charges for sports facilities in Epping Forest for 2012/13, as detailed in Appendix A be approved. ii) The Superintendent retains delegated powers to discount or waive charges for trial periods in order to develop both new pitch configurations and off-peak and out-of-season use, and to help target under represented groups identified in the Sports Development Plan. iii) The Superintendent retains delegated powers to revise the current sport charges terms and conditions and retain the new deposit arrangement for clubs 'block booking' pitches in advance that was introduced three years ago. 		

Main Report

Background

1. Charges for the wide range of sporting facilities that are provided in the City's Open Spaces are traditionally reviewed annually. The current charges for 2011/12 were approved by the appropriate service Committees in May 2011.

2. The current charging system had developed from the recommendations from two reviews of sports charging policy which have been undertaken in recent years. In 2002 an internal review recommended that the approach to charges was standardised and better management information was provided. The review attempted to clarify what was meant by a 'consistent' pricing policy in relation to the sports facilities, although it was accepted that it would be unrealistic to have one charge for the same sporting activity irrespective of the area, as this would not take any account of local factors.
3. A further extension review of the charging policy at Hampstead Heath and the other Open Spaces was carried out by consultants in 2005 to investigate whether further income generation could be achieved. The review established that there was still an inconsistent approach to pricing structures and the concessionary policy for some facilities at different sites, and several amendments to the charging policy were adopted.
4. Public Sports Facilities at Epping Forest include 58 Football Pitches at Wanstead Flats, together with a public play 18 Hole Golf Course. A further 3 golf courses and 3 cricket pitches are provided on Forest and Buffer Land by arrangement with private clubs.
5. Charges for Season 2011/12 saw a 10% increase in the Saturday charges whilst the Sunday charges were unchanged. This decision was taken to bring the Saturday prices more in line with the more expensive Sunday prices whilst not seeking punitive rises from the Saturday football players.

Charging Policy

6. While the overall aim is to increase the income received from the sports facilities in the Open Spaces, it has been accepted that charges should aim to recover relevant costs as a minimum. For some activities, charges strive to maximise income but there is a controlled subsidy to promote the activity. Charges should also be related to the market price and local comparators, and the blend of options that has been adopted provides a flexible approach to charging that can be applied to each activity as appropriate.
7. The Sport Development Plan for Wanstead Flats developed in partnership with the Football Foundation and previously adopted by this Committee has set ambitious targets for increasing participation in sport amongst under-represented groups.

8. Where concessionary charges apply, it had been agreed that they should generally be set at 50% of the full price for the facility and apply to young people under 17, students in full time education, older people aged 60 or over, disabled people, unemployed people and schools/youth organisations, on production of the appropriate identification.
9. The Superintendents have previously received delegated authority to carry out trials for limited periods in order to encourage off-peak use, to see whether demand increases as a result of different charging arrangements and to closely monitor such trials, so that they can be halted if a beneficial outcome is not achieved. They have also been allowed to consider not charging for facilities at certain times, if the cost of supervising the facility is much higher than the income received.

Charging proposals for 2012/13

10. The overall charging policy has been taken into account when formulating the proposed sports charges for 2012/13, which are attached as Appendix A to this report.
11. Appendix B is a price comparison from local competitors and these prices have also been taken into consideration. The Superintendents will continue to monitor closely the usage of their sports facilities and the income received and it is proposed that we will introduce a 10% rise for Saturday play with the Sunday rate again frozen.
12. The Superintendents continue to consult with local users and neighbouring boroughs about their local sports strategies to ensure that the objectives for sports provision in our Open Spaces are in line with local needs. The feasibility of extending concessionary charges to include specific local groups, and to offer other discounts, possibly in association with the local Boroughs, will continue to be considered in the future.
13. The Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee were consulted on Monday 19th March 2012 at the formal committee meeting and were supportive of the proposed changes.

Financial Considerations

14. The City's Financial Regulations require all departments to recover full costs when setting charges to persons or external organisations, or submit reason to the appropriate service Committee when that objective is not

met. It is, therefore, at the discretion of individual spending Committees to determine the actual level of fees and charges relative to the services that provide, after taking into account local considerations and priorities.

15. The provision of football at Wanstead Flats during 2011/12 season was subsidised by the City of London at a cost of £124,000.
16. The City's budget management policy for 2012-13 assumes income will be at least the same as 2011/12. We have been informed that some sports clubs are either in financial hardship or are closing down due to the loss of members. The 10% increase on Saturdays still ensures Wanstead Flats is cheaper than many local competitors and brings the Saturday charges nearer to the Sunday charges which will address a perceived unfairness cited by Sunday users.
17. Any change to VAT has very little impact on income as over 90% of football played at Wanstead Flats is non-vatable.

Legal Implications

18. Section 33(1) (xiii) of the Epping Forest Act 1878 provides the Conservators with the power to "set apart in each or any of the Forest Parishes, such parts as they think fit, for the use of inhabitants to play at cricket and other sports, and to lay out, form and maintain, cricket grounds and grounds for other sports, and, for the better use and enjoyment of the parts so set apart, to enter into agreements with, and confer special privileges on particular clubs or schools".

Community Strategy and other significant implications

19. The provision of a wide range of sports facilities in the City's Open Spaces supports the following themes in the Community Strategy – A World Class City, A Healthy City, A Vibrant and Culturally Rich City, and An Inclusive and Outward Looking City.
20. The annual review of charges is also in line with the objectives in the departmental Business Plan.

Conclusion

21. The City seeks to maximise the use of the sporting activities in its Open Spaces and encourage active participation from all sections of the community. The benchmarked approach to charging for sporting facilities

in the Open Spaces will therefore continue to be reviewed annually, in the light of market conditions, user requirements and the implementation of local sports strategies.

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Appendix A

EPPING FOREST				
Wanstead Flats Playing Fields – Football Pitches			Current	Proposed
			2011/12	2012/13
Season (VAT exempt)			£0.00	£0.00
11-a-side	Mon-Fri: 20 games / 40 wks	Adult (18+)	360	360
		Youth (17-18)	275	275
		Child (u16)	170	170
	Sat: 16 games / 32 weeks	Adult (18+)	400	440
		Youth (17-18)	305	330
		Child (u16)	190	210
	Sun: 16 games / 32 weeks	Adult (18+)	740	740
		Youth (17-18)	555	555
		Child (u16)	295	295
Small Sided	Mon-Fri: 20 games	Adult (18+)	272	272
	Sat: 16 games		300	300
	Sun: 16 games		340	340
	Mon-Fri: 20 games	Youth (17-18)	206	206
	Sat: 16 games		225	250
	Sun: 16 games		255	255
	Mon-Fri: 20 games	Child (u16)	150	150
	Sat: 16 games		165	175
	Sun: 16 games		204	204
Mini Soccer	Mon-Fri: 20 games	Child (u16)	160	160
	Sat: 16 games		175	195
	Sun: 16 games		220	220
Casual Play (per game, fee subject to VAT)			£0.00	£0.00
11 a-side	Mon-Fri	Adult (18+)	50	50
		Youth (17-18)	39	39
		Child (u16)	28	28
	Saturday	Adult (18+)	53	60
		Youth (17-18)	46	50
		Child (u16)	34	37
	Sunday	Adult (18+)	73	73
		Youth (17-18)	55	55
		Child (u16)	43	43
Small Sided	Mon-Fri	Adult (18+)	30	30
	Saturday		44	50
	Sunday		50	50
	Mon-Fri	Youth (17-18)	23	23
	Saturday		33	38
	Sunday		38	38
	Mon-Fri	Child (u16)	20	20
	Saturday		28	29
	Sunday		29	29
Mini Soccer	Mon-Fri	Child (u16)	25	25
	Saturday		31	31
	Sunday		31	31

Bulk Booking Discounts:

Games booked per week for the Season	Discount available on total booking fee
2-4	5%
5-7	7.5%
8-10	10%
11-14	12.5%
15+	15%

Note:

- Retain the Youth (17-18) rate that was trialled last year in response to drop out in youth football from the transition from u16 to adult teams.
- A 10% increase has been introduced for all Saturday football – this is still very competitive in comparison to local competitors.
- Sunday rate (particularly ‘adult’ fee) remains above any local grass football pitch provider and needs to be reasonably and more competitively priced.