

Committee(s):	Date(s):
West Ham Park Committee	17 Feb 2014
Subject: West Ham Park Sports Charges 2014/15	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
<p>Summary</p> <p>Within the City Corporation's Open Spaces, charges for sports activities are reviewed annually. At West Ham Park this year, it is proposed that all prices be increased in line with inflation.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the proposed schedule of charges (attached at Appendix 2) for sports facilities in West Ham Park for the 2014/15 financial year. 	

Main Report

Background

1. A wide range of sporting facilities are provided throughout the City Corporation's Open Spaces and the charges for these are reviewed annually. The current charges for West Ham Park were approved by the Open Spaces, City Gardens and West Ham Park Committee in February 2013.

Current Position

2. 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. As a result, the blend of options that has been adopted provides a flexible approach to charging that can be applied to each activity as appropriate.
3. Where concessionary charges apply, these have traditionally been set at 50% of the full price for the facility and apply to: young people under 17; students in

full time education; people aged 60 or over; unemployed people and schools/youth organisations. Concessions are granted on the production of any appropriate form of identification.

4. The Superintendent has 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. The Superintendent may also consider not charging for facilities at certain times, if the cost of collecting the income for that facility is much higher than the amount of income received.
5. A summary of income received from sports charges 2011/12 and 2012/13 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. There has been an overall reduction in income of £8,273. 2012 was, on average, a great deal wetter than 2011 and this has had a considerable impact, notably on tennis income. Cricket 'general' showed no significant change in income. Income received from the football pitches decreased due to the number of 'home' teams playing at the park reducing back to one (from three the previous year). Schools sports bookings also decreased. The combined reduction across almost all sports may be due predominantly to the poor weather conditions of 2012-2013, but may also in part be due to the number of free sporting activities offered throughout the season as part of the 'Green to Gold' Campaign, designed to complement the Olympic and Paralympic summer with the aim of providing a sporting legacy. It is hoped that the positive benefit of this will be reflected in future sports income.
6. Provision of tennis coaching for children was provided free by the Tessa Sanderson Foundation and Academy. This enabled over 400 young people to participate in tennis over the spring and summer months. Active Newham, the trust that delivers sports and recreation for the London Borough of Newham, provided free cricket coaching throughout the summer and this has replaced the previous West Ham Park Cricket clinic run by Essex County Cricket club.

Proposals

7. The overall charging policy has been taken into account when formulating the proposed West Ham Park sports charges for 2014/15, which are attached as Appendix 2 to this report. It is proposed that all charges for the coming year will be increased in line with the current rate of inflation (2% in January 2014), although rounding up has been applied in many cases to ease cash handling. The Superintendent will continue to monitor closely the usage of the sports facilities and the income received.
8. The proposed charges for 2014/15 also take into account the current VAT charges of 20%. The charges for block booking of football are not subject to VAT as more than ten games are booked each season (subject to HMRC conditions being met).
9. The University of East London and Stratford Colleges have requested the use of the tennis courts, cricket nets, football and cricket pitches during term time,

to accommodate their sports clubs and physical education programmes. The Superintendent proposes to implement the same fees as charged for schools.

10. Officers continue to consult with local users and the London Borough of Newham about their local sports strategies to ensure that the objectives for sports provision in West Ham Park is in line with local needs. The feasibility of extending concessionary charges to include specific local groups and to offer other sporting opportunities in association with Newham Council, the Lawn Tennis Association and the Tessa Sanderson Foundation and Academy, will continue to be considered in the future.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. The proposed sports charges support four of the five community strategy themes:
 - Supports our communities – by encouraging well-being and participation in volunteer activities
 - Protects, promotes and enhances our environment – by encouraging use and enjoyment of City open spaces
 - Is vibrant and culturally rich – by promoting and encouraging activities for all
 - Is safer and stronger – evidence suggests increasing legitimate use in open space creates a safer environment
12. The proposed sports charges link to the following two of the five aims identified in the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2013-16:
 - Inclusion: Involve communities and partners in developing a sense of place through the care and management of our sites
 - Promotion: Promote opportunities to value and enjoy the outdoors for recreation, learning and healthy living

Implications

13. The City's Financial Regulations require all departments to recover full costs when setting charges to persons or external organisations, or submit reasons 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 they provide, after taking into account local considerations and priorities.
14. Any shortfall in income, from the budgeted level, would need to be met by offsetting reductions elsewhere in the Chief Officers' local risk budgets or from new income sources. In light of the current financial situation it is desirable that, where appropriate, income generated from fees and charges should be maximised, where this can be achieved within individual Committees' pricing policies.
15. The majority of the increases in fees and charges proposed in this report have been set in line with inflation and should produce additional income in line with the City's budget management policy.

Conclusion

16. 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 approach to charging for sports facilities in West Ham Park will continue to be reviewed annually, in the light of market conditions, user requirements and the implementation of local sports strategies.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Sports Income 2011/12 and 2012/13
- Appendix 2 - Schedule of proposed sports charges for 2014/15

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