

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>Committee(s):</b>  | <b>Date(s):</b>     |
| Epping Forest and Commons   | 7 July 2014         |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Epping Forest Football Charges 2014/15         | <b>Public</b>       |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Superintendent of Epping Forest<br>SEF 25/14 | <b>For Decision</b> |

### Summary

This report reviews the charges for the sport facilities that are provided at Epping Forest, and seeks approval for the proposed charges for 2014/15.

The proposal is to increase the charge by 2.5% (3.5% for adults and 2.5% for juniors) and to hold the Sunday published tariff charges at current levels. The City has held Sunday prices for the past 5 years, while it has increased Saturday prices by 10% for the past 2 years. The Sunday price differential is now considered to be in balance. After 5 years of holding Sunday prices during the recession a moderate increase of 2.5%, which represents the current retail price index is considered proportionate.

### **Recommendations**

- I recommend that the proposed charges for sports facilities in Epping Forest for 2014/15, as detailed in Appendix A be approved.
- 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 underrepresented groups identified in the Sports Development Plan.
- The Superintendent retains delegated powers to revise the current sport charges terms and conditions and retain the deposit arrangement for clubs 'block booking' pitches in advance that was introduced four years ago.

## Main Report

### **Background**

1. Since 1890 the Conservators have at the request of the London Playing Fields Committee provided sports facilities at Wanstead Flats. Current provision now extends to 43 pitches and 3 sports pavilions over a 'footprint' of 150 acres of Wanstead Flats.
2. 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 2013/14 were approved by the appropriate service Committees in May 2013.

3. The current charging system had developed from the recommendations from two reviews of sports charging policy which have been undertaken over the last eleven 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.
4. A further extensive 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. A further review of pricing is currently underway at Hampstead Heath. The ability to manage a pricing policy will be significantly improved once an online sports pitch booking system is delivered. This is currently being scoped by the IS division.
5. Sports Facilities at Epping Forest include Football Pitches at Wanstead Flats. The charging regime for The Royal Epping Golf Club, Chingford Men's and Chingford Ladies golf clubs and public play 18 Hole Golf Course at Chingford will be the subject of a separate report to your Committee.
6. Charges for Season 2013/14 saw a further 10% increase in the Saturday charges whilst the Sunday charges were unchanged. This decision was taken to bring the Saturday prices in line with the more expensive Sunday prices, whilst not being too unfair on the Saturday football players.
7. The overall cost for football charges was also increased during the last season by the removal of the higher block booking discounts which ranged from 5% to 15%.

### **Current Position**

8. 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.
9. The Sport Development Plan for Wanstead Flats prepared in partnership with the Football Foundation but not placed before this Committee has set ambitious targets for increasing participation in sport amongst under-represented groups.
10. 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.

11. The Superintendent has 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.
12. The Football Association has recently published a new 3 year Pitch Strategy, which recognises the importance of publically managed football provision which accounts for 80% of all grassroots football matches.

### **Charging proposals for 2014/15**

13. The overall charging policy has been taken into account when formulating the proposed sports charges for 2013/14, which are attached as Appendix A to this report.
14. Appendix B is a price comparison from local competitors and these prices have also been taken into consideration. The Superintendent will continue to monitor closely the usage of their sports facilities and the income received
15. 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.
16. The Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee was consulted on Monday 16 March 2014 at the formal committee meeting and was supportive of the proposed changes.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

17. 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.
18. The annual review of charges is also in line with the objectives in the departmental Business Plan.

### **Implications**

19. **Legal** – Football play and facilities at Wanstead Flats are provided by virtue of Section 33(1)(xiii) of the Epping Forest Act 1878, which 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 the 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”.

20. **Financial** - 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.
21. The City’s budget management policy for 2014/15 assumes income will be at least the same as 2013/14. We have been informed that some sports clubs are either in financial hardship or are closing down due to economic reasons, however, the 5% increase will ensure that Wanstead Flats remains cheaper than many local competitors.
22. Any change to VAT has very little impact on income as over 90% of football played at Wanstead Flats is non-vatable.
23. The Conservators continue to apply a public subsidy to manage football at Wanstead Flats which in the year 2012/13 is estimated to cost to £135K.

## **Conclusion**

24. The provision of football facilities at Wanstead Flats over the past 123 years has grown to provide facilities of pan-London importance which matches the total public pitch provision of some adjoining Local Authorities.
25. The careful pricing of football provision is necessary in order to secure the best possible levels of public park provision in football, while also maximising the use of Epping Forest’s sporting facilities. The continued level of subsidy required to match Local Authority financial support for pitch provision remains a major concern regarding the onward sustainability of the operation.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Pitch Hire Fee Allocation

### **James Thatcher**

Football Co-ordinator

T: 020 8532 1010

E: [james.thatcher@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:james.thatcher@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

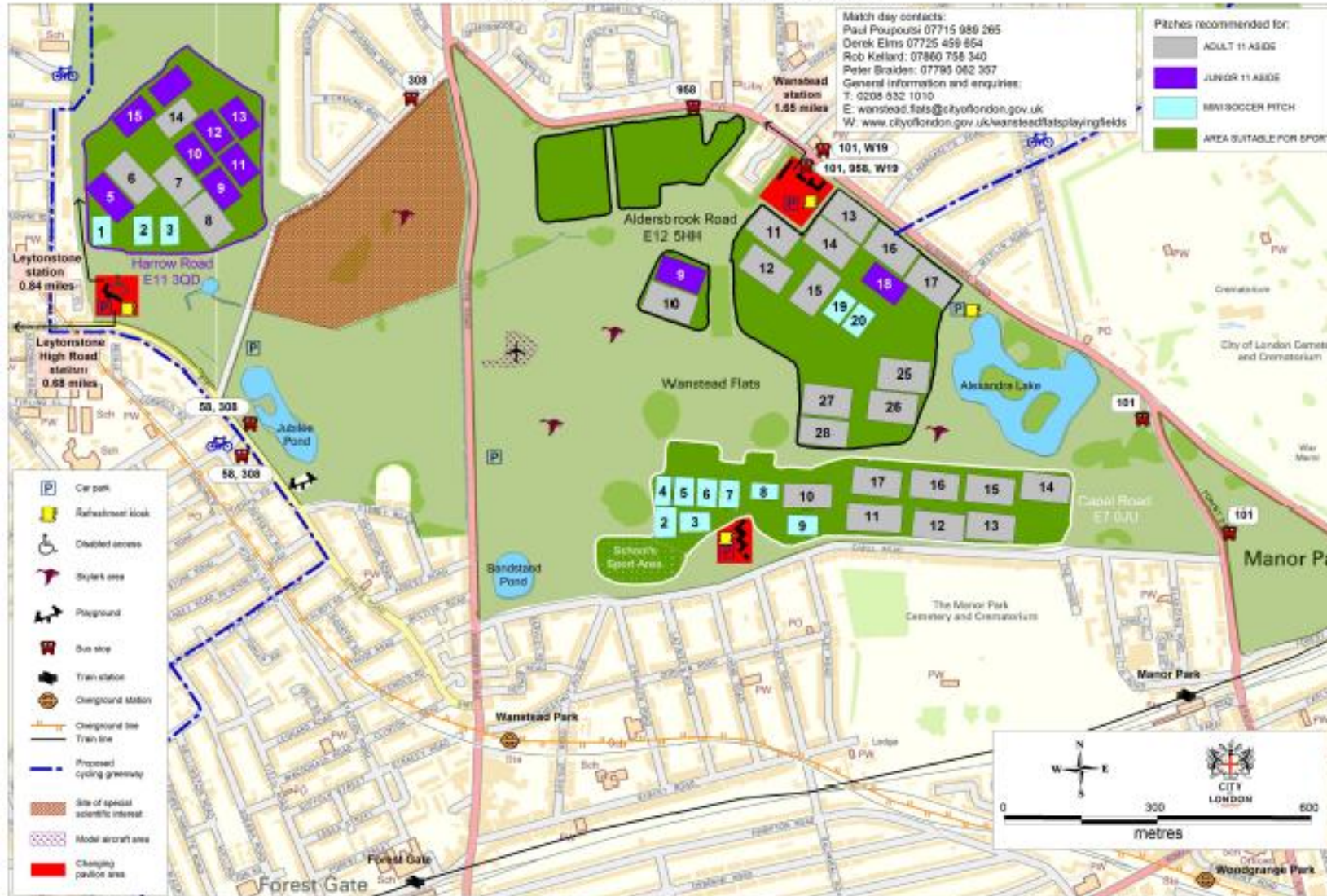
**Appendix 1 –**  
**Wanstead Flats Playing Fields**  
**2014/15 Pitch Hire Fee Comparison**

| Local Authority Provider | Games      | Adult        |              | Adult      |            | Youth         |               | Youth      |            | Mini       |        | Mini       |        |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|--------|------------|--------|
|                          |            | Season Fee   |              | Casual Fee |            | Season Fee    |               | Casual Fee |            | Season Fee |        | Casual Fee |        |
|                          |            | SAT          | SUN          | SAT        | SUN        | SAT           | SUN           | SAT        | SUN        | SAT        | SUN    | SAT        | SUN    |
| GLL (LB Hackney)         | 10         | £485         | £485         | £84        | £84        | £385          | £385          | £55        | £55        | £285       | £285   | £35        | £35    |
|                          | <i>PPG</i> | £48.50       | £48.50       | x          | x          | £38.50        | £38.50        | x          | x          | £28.50     | £28.50 | x          | x      |
| LB Newham                | 13         | £530<br>£635 | £530<br>£635 | £74<br>£86 | £74<br>£86 | £265<br>£320  | £265<br>£320  | £37<br>£44 | £37<br>£44 | x          | x      | x          | x      |
| <i>Resident Non-Res</i>  | <i>PPG</i> | £41<br>£49   | £41<br>£49   | x          | x          | £20<br>£25    | £20<br>£25    | x          | x          | x          | x      | x          | x      |
| LB Waltham Forest        | 13         | £775<br>£612 | £910<br>£791 | £83        | £100       | £387<br>£306  | £455<br>£395  | £42        | £50        | £160       | £160   | £16        | £16    |
| <i>Grade A Grade B</i>   | <i>PPG</i> | £60<br>£47   | £70<br>£61   | x          | x          | £30<br>£23.50 | £35<br>£30.50 | x          | x          | £12.50     | £12.50 | x          | x      |
| LB Redbridge             | 13         | £598         | £840         | £70        | £80        | £295          | £420          | £45        | £55        | £250       | £350   | £30        | £30    |
|                          | <i>PPG</i> | £46          | £65          | x          | x          | £23           | £32           | x          | x          | £20        | £27    | x          | x      |
| West Ham Park            | 16         | £420         | £598         | £73        | £73        | x             | x             | £73        | £73        | x          | x      | £45        | £45    |
|                          | <i>PPG</i> | £26.25       | £37.37       | x          | x          | x             | x             | x          | x          | x          | x      | x          | x      |
| Wanstead Flats           | 16         | £484         | £740         | £66        | £73        | £231          | £295          | £41        | £43        | £215       | £220   | £31        | £31.50 |
|                          | <i>PPG</i> | £30.25       | £46.25       | x          | x          | £14.45        | £18.43        | x          | x          | £13.50     | £13.75 | x          | x      |

Key

Highest Price  
Lowest Price

## Wanstead Flats Playing Fields 2014/2015



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (City of London Corporation: 10002124) (10/14)