

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest and Commons	11052015
Subject: Epping Forest Football Charges 2015/16	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 21/15	For Information

Summary

This report reviews the charges for the sport facilities that are provided at Epping Forest, and seeks approval for the proposed charges for the 2015/16 season.

The proposal following a review of charges is to hold the current published seasonal tariff charges at 2014/15 levels but reducing the season to a 30 week season from the current 32 week season which represents an effective 4% increase to the teams, while retaining a 1.6% increase for one off bookings. The prices are detailed below in Appendix One. The proposal received the support of the Wanstead Flats Playing Fields (WFPPF) Committee on 26 March.

The City had held Sunday prices for the previous 5 years before increasing by 3.5% last season, while it has increased Saturday prices by 10% for the previous 3 seasons until a 3.5% increase last season. The 1:1.5 Saturday/Sunday price differential is now considered to be in balance.

Recommendations

- I recommend that the proposed charges for sports facilities in Epping Forest for 2015/16, be held at 2014/15 season rates while reducing the season duration from 32 to 30 weeks, securing an overall 4% increase, whilst retaining a 1.6% Consumer Price Index increase for individual date bookings.
- 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 five years ago.

Main Report

Background

1. Since 1890 the Conservators have at the request of the London Playing Fields Society (now Foundation) provided sports facilities at Wanstead Flats. Current provision now extends to 45 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 2014/15 were approved by the appropriate service Committees in July 2014.
3. 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 this Committee.
4. Charges for Season 2014/15 saw an increase in the Saturday charges and the Sunday charges that were raised by CPI (3.5%). This decision was taken to bring the current prices in line with the then rate of CPI.
5. The overall cost for football charges was also increased during the previous season by the removal of some of the higher block booking discounts which ranged from 5% to 15%.

Current Position

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. 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.
8. 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.
9. The Football Association published a 3 year Pitch Strategy last season, which recognises the importance of publically managed football provision which accounts for 80% of all grassroots football matches.

10. Since its foundation in 1959, the Wanstead Playing Fields Committee which consists of representatives of the major leagues and the southern Verderers, has been consulted on the management of football at Wanstead Flats. The Committee stated its support for these pricing revisions at its meeting of 16 March 2015.
11. 2015 sees Wanstead Flats celebrate its 125th Anniversary which it shares with the London Playing Fields Foundation (LPFF) who were the original operators of the sports pitches at WFPF until 1919. Your Committee agreed in 1890 to allow LPFF to begin an experiment to create new playing pitches which were originally occupied rent free.

Charging proposals for 2015/16

12. The proposal to reduce the length of the season is made for three reasons one to bring us into line with our major competitors, and two to respond to the biggest single reason for adverse comment from our current customers. The shorter season will also bring some small financial savings.
13. The overall charging policy has been taken into account when formulating the proposed sports charges for 2015/16, which are attached as Appendix A to this report.
14. Appendix 1 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.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. 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.
17. The annual review of charges is also in line with the objectives in the departmental Business Plan.

Implications

18. **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”.

19. Section 76(1)(b) of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907, as applied to Epping Forest, also allows the Conservators to set apart areas for the purpose of cricket, football, or any other game or recreation. Under section 56(5) of the Public Health Act 1925 the Conservators may charge reasonable sums for the use thereof.
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 they provide, after taking into account local considerations and priorities.
21. The provision of football at Wanstead Flats cost £199,000 in 2014/15, compared to £202,000 in 2013/14. The level of income for 2014/15 is expected to be £69,000, representing an operational subsidy of £130,000 compared to an operational subsidy of £135,000 in 2013/4. The levels of arrears for the current year have been reduced from £3,500 in 2013/14 to £250.
22. The City’s budget management policy for 2015/16 assumes income will be at least the same as 2014/15. Previously some sports clubs have reported that they are either in financial hardship or have closed down due to economic reasons, however, the reduced season length will ensure that Wanstead Flats remains competitive with its local competitors.
23. Any change to VAT has very little impact on income as over 85% of football played at Wanstead Flats is non-vatable.

Conclusion

24. The provision of football facilities at Wanstead Flats over the past 125 years has grown to provide facilities of pan-London importance which exceeds the total public pitch provision of most 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

Appendix 1 –

Wanstead Flats Playing Fields 2015/16 Pitch Hire Fee Comparison

Local Authority Provider	Games	Adult		Adult		Child		Child		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
Wanstead Flats	15	£500	£770	£62.50	£75	£240	£300	£42	£45	£215	£225	£36	£36
	<i>PPG</i>	<i>£33.33</i>	<i>£51.33</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£16</i>	<i>£20</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£13.45</i>	<i>£15</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
LPGF (Fairlop and Redbridge)	14	£1174	£1209	£126	£130	£482	£482	£43	£43	£336	£336	£30	£30
	<i>PPG</i>	<i>£83.85</i>	<i>£86.35</i>			<i>£34.50</i>	<i>£34.50</i>			<i>£24</i>	<i>£24</i>		
GLL (LB Hackney)	10	£692	£692	£84	£84	£400	£400	£55	£55	£300	£300	£41	£41
	<i>PPG</i>	<i>£69.20</i>	<i>£69.20</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£40</i>	<i>£40</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£30</i>	<i>£30</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
LB Newham	13	£530 £635	£530 £635	£74 £86	£74 £86	£265 £320	£265 £320	£37 £44	£37 £44	x	x	x	x
<i>Resident</i>	<i>PPG</i>	<i>£41</i>	<i>£41</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£20</i>	<i>£20</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Non-Res</i>		<i>£49</i>	<i>£49</i>			<i>£25</i>	<i>£25</i>						
LB Waltham Forest	13 (10 mini)	£775 £612	£910 £791	£83	£100	£387 £306	£455 £395	£42	£50	£168	£168	£23	£23
<i>Grade A</i>	<i>PPG</i>	<i>£60</i>	<i>£70</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£30</i>	<i>£35</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£16.80</i>	<i>£16.80</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Grade B</i>		<i>£47</i>	<i>£61</i>			<i>£23.50</i>	<i>£30.50</i>						
LB Redbridge	13	£745	£867	£87	£99	£304	£433	£45	£50	£275	£375	£32	£32
	<i>PPG</i>	<i>£46</i>	<i>£65</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£23</i>	<i>£32</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>£20</i>	<i>£27</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
West Ham Park	16	£420	£600	£73	£73	X	x	£73	£73	x	x	£45	£45
	<i>PPG</i>	<i>£26.25</i>	<i>£37.50</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>

Key

Highest Price

Lowest Price

