

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Epping Forest and Commons	9 May 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Epping Forest Association Football Charges 2016/17 (SEF 18/16)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of Epping Forest	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> James Thatcher – Epping Forest	

### Summary

This report reviews the charges for the Association Football facilities that are provided at Epping Forest, and seeks approval for the proposed charges for the 2016/17 season.

The proposal following a review of charges is to increase the annual fees by 0.6 – 6% to bring prices further into line with comparison sites. The prices are detailed in Appendix A and compared in the graph in Appendix B.

The City had held Sunday prices for 5 years before increasing by 4% last season, while it has increased Saturday prices by 10% for 3 seasons until a 3.5% increase last season. The 2016/17 prices increases will bring Saturday/Sunday price differential closer to the optimum target of 1:1.3 balance.

### Recommendations

- That the proposed charges for sports facilities in Epping Forest for 2016/17 be increased as detailed in Appendix A.
- 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.
- 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 City of London (COL) has at the request of the London Playing Fields Society (now Foundation) provided sports facilities at Wanstead Flats. Current Association Football provision now extends to 44 football pitches, 1 Lacrosse pitch and 3 sports pavilions over a footprint of 150 acres of Wanstead Flats.

2. Charges for Season 2015/16 saw an increase in the Saturday charges and the Sunday charges that were raised by Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 4%. CPI is the official measure of inflation of Consumer prices in the United Kingdom.
3. 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 10% and represents the equivalent of a further increase of a minimum of 5% of the maximum possible discount.

### **Current Position**

4. The City of London current approach to charging aims to maximise income but balanced by a controlled subsidy which allows promotion of the activity to stimulate access and to develop future participants.
5. 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.

### **Charging proposals for 2016/17**

6. Charges have been increased this year on an individual category basis rather than by percentage in order to bring charges more closely in line with neighbouring facilities. The level of increase ranges from 0.6% to 6.6%. Charges have been increased for adult season pitch hire and for adult casual hire, although the pricing remains at the lower end of the price comparison. For comparison CPI rose by 0.5% to March 2016. CPI is forecast to rise by between 1.7 and 2% over the length of the forthcoming season. A rise of 6% is proposed for Saturday Adult football to reduce the Saturday/Sunday price ratio closer to the optimum pricing target of 1:1.3.
7. Charges have not been increased for youth pitch hire as charges are competitive and we wish to encourage a greater uptake in youth football.
8. The comparison of pitch hire charges between WFPF and its nearest competitors is detailed in Appendix A along with a graph in Appendix B to demonstrate pictorially where Wanstead Flats charges per game sit alongside competitors before price increases.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

9. An Open Spaces Project Board is currently working on an Open Spaces wide policy for sport; a comparison and review of sports charges across the directorate as well as undertaking consultation to determine current

and future needs for sport. This will be reported to your committee at a later date.

## Implications

10. **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”.
11. 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.
12. The provision of sports pitches helps the Open Spaces department achieve one of its Departmental objectives; to ‘improve the health and well being of the community through access to green space and recreation’. It also delivers the Corporation’s Key Policy Priority KPP5 of ‘increasing the outreach impact of the City’s cultural, heritage and leisure contribution to the life of London and the nation.
13. **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.
14. The provision of football at Wanstead Flats cost £182,914 in 2015/16, compared to £198,260 in 2014/15. The level of income for 2015/16 will be £80,198, (£67,685 in 2014/5) representing an operational subsidy of £102,716 compared to an operational subsidy of £130,575 in 2014/15. The levels of arrears for the current year have been maintained at £250. It is expected WFPF will host over 3500 matches in 2015/6 compared to 2913 in 2014/5. This season the pitches will have hosted over 75,000 players compared to 66,000 last season (2014/5). The pitches acted as a home venue for 297 teams from 123 clubs from a variety of backgrounds. In total over 600 teams (home and away) will have played at WFPF.

15. The breakdown of income is as follows

Income	2014/5	2015/6	Difference
Grants	£ 6,920	£ 3,910	(-£3,010)
Casual	£ 6,194	£14,336	+£8,142
Seasonal	£53,219	£59,007	+£5,788
Meeting Room	£ 1,352	£ 2,945	+£1,593
TOTAL	£67,685	£80,198	+£12,513

16. The City's budget management policy for 2016/17 assumes income will be at least the same as 2015/16. Previously some sports clubs have reported that they are either in financial hardship or have closed down due to economic reasons, however, the proposed modest increase will ensure that Wanstead Flats remains competitive with its local competitors.

17. Any change to VAT has very little impact on income as over 80% of football played at Wanstead Flats is not subject to VAT.

## Conclusion

18. The provision of football facilities at Wanstead Flats over the past 126 years has grown to provide facilities of pan-London importance which exceeds the total public pitch provision of most adjoining Local Authorities.

19. 18. The careful pricing of football provision is necessary in order to secure the best possible levels of public park provision in 'grassroots' Association football, while also maximising the use of Epping Forest's sporting facilities. Though the level of subsidy has been successfully reduced the continued level of subsidy required to match Local Authority financial support for pitch provision remains a concern regarding the onward sustainability of the operation.

## Appendices

Appendix A – Pitch Hire Fee Allocation

Appendix B – PPG Comparison Bar Chart

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