

Committee	Dated:
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee	8 February 2023
Subject: Hampstead Heath Fees and Charges 2023-24	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 3, 4, 5, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment	For Decision
Report author: Stefania Horne, Assistant Director - Environment Department	

Summary

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for a range of sports and services provided at Hampstead Heath for 2023-24.

The increase is in line with benchmarking and based on main cost recovery, considering that the main costs are salary costs and also to continue to facilitate participation, taking account the raising costs of living.

It is proposed that the majority of charges are increased by 5% or increased to align with relevant benchmarks, as set out in appendix 1.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members agree the proposed fees and charges for 2023-24, as set out in appendix 1 of this report.

Main Report

Background

1. Charges for a wide range of services, recreation and sporting activities provided across the City of London Corporation's Open Spaces are reviewed annually, to ensure that prices and ticket options are relevant and appropriate.

2. The income generated from fees and charges contribute towards the cost of providing sports and recreational facilities across Hampstead Heath.
3. Sports fees and charges are not based on full cost recovery and are subsidised by the Charities to promote participation in formal and informal recreation to support health and wellbeing.

Consultation

4. The proposed charges have been presented to the Hampstead Heath Sports & Wellbeing Forum (HHSWF) and the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (HHCC).
5. There was a general consensus from the HHSWF for an increase of the charges by 5%. However, specific representations have been received from the Highgate Men's Pond Association (HMPA), the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association (KLPA) and Hampstead Rugby Football Club (HRFC) which are included at appendix 2.
6. The representations can be summarized as follows:
 - They acknowledge that the proposed increase of 5% is lower than other current inflationary figures.
 - They seek a better understanding of the reasons for the increase.
 - They request an extension of the free swimming times for the over 60s from 7:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. to mirror the practice in Camden and to coincide with free travel on the TfL network.
 - They are concerned about year-on-year increases and propose a price freeze in light of the current economic climate.
 - They note a previous above inflation increase for concessionary tickets during 2020-21.
 - They request a 6-month free swimming season ticket for recently arrived refugees.
 - They request the introduction of direct debit instalment payments for swimming season tickets.
 - Considerations of a support fund for swimmers who cannot afford season tickets.
7. The following comments are provided in response to the representations from the HMPA and the KLPA:
 - The main cost increase for the management of the ponds is staff wages. Staff wages within CoL increased in 2023 between 7% and 4% depending on the grade.
 - The morning free swimming for over 60s and under 16 is a generous offer during some of the peak hours for our ponds. Our current systems are not

sophisticated enough for us to gather detailed information on usage by age group at different times and we are currently investigating a new system that would provide better data and explore the feasibility of season ticket payments being made over the course of the year. There are a number of initiatives that are already in place for people in need over and above the free swimming offer including:

- A comprehensive range of concessions which offers a 40% discount that is very competitive compared to other swimming provisions
 - Free access for any carer accompanying a disabled swimmer
 - Volunteers are able to earn free access to a range of services and activities on the Heath, including swimming.
- The cost of a concession season ticket remains low at just over £83 for the year or £44 for six months meaning that those people who are eligible pay as little as £1.60 or £1.70 per week.
 - The discount available for swimming concessions was formally revised down from 50% to 40% from 2020-21 to align with the general concessionary rate available on the Heath and at other Corporation open spaces. This was agreed as part of the fees and charges process.
 - These charges are reviewed annually to take into consideration any detailed reviews, inflation, cost of living and benchmarking. The cost of swimming in the ponds is one of the lowest when compared to other providers with similar offers.
 - Other providers will have their own rationale for the concessions they offer. Often, the cost of swimming can be subsidised by other activities such as gym and exercise classes that makes the free offer possible. This is not the case with the Hampstead Heath ponds.
 - With regards to an additional support fund, the swimming associations have previously been advised that the Hampstead Heath charity is willing to help publicise such a scheme but that it is not in a position to administer or fund it.

8. The representations from the HRFC can be summarised as follows:

- The increase in charges, given inflation this year, are understandable.
- However, cumulative price rises for pitch and changing room hire since 2014 have been quite significant for the club and could be quite a challenge for their finances.

9. The following comments are provided in response to the representations from the HRFC:

- Benchmarking in appendix 3 shows that hire charges for pitches are comparable with other sites in London. The costs in relation to the pavilion are due to the fact that building maintenance costs are high, and the fees charged do not cover the cost to provide the facility, which includes both staff costs and building maintenance. This is why pavilions have disappeared from most local

authority portfolios. Officers are happy to have further discussions in relation to club use and explore the opportunity for greater partnership working in relation to the maintenance of the facility. This will take some time and it is recommended that a report be brought back to committee in due course.

10. A point was also raised at the HHCC to continue to review concessionary charges. The current policy for concessions is a 40% discount from the fees and charges and members could consider increasing this but there will be an increase in subsidy that could impact on the sustainability of the facility. A more thorough review of income generated by concession would be needed and the current systems and budget monitoring makes this analysis not straightforward.

Proposed Charges 2023-24

11. It is proposed that the majority of charges are increased by 5%, or increased to align with relevant benchmarks, as set out in appendix 1.
12. Officers have undertaken benchmarking (appendix 3) to ensure charges remain in-line with local providers. The level of inflation is substantially higher (9.2% in December 2022, Office of National Statistics) and the proposal to increase the majority of fees and charges by 5% is aligned with some London boroughs that are increasing around this level to encourage participation and accessibility noting the increased cost of living.
13. The proposed fees and charges include concessionary rates, offering a 40% discount on the standard adult charge, except where indicated.
14. Following local benchmarking we are proposing to increase car parking charges by 15% for 0-2 hours & 2-4 hours, and by 11% for the additional hours. The additional hours charge is set to discourage commuter parking to ensure the parking facilities are available for Heath visitors. Free parking is provided for Blue Badge holders.
15. Car parking charges will be subject to a wider Natural Environment review during 2023/24. A further report will be presented to Committee following the review.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic Implications

16. This contributes towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23. Contribute to a flourishing society (1-4), Support a thriving economy (5) and Shape outstanding environments (9-12).
17. The proposed fees and charges directly support the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018-2028 Strategic Outcomes A: The Heath is maintained as a flourishing

green space and historic landscape, B: Improved quality of life for Heath visitors, C: The Heath is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors and D: Greater number of and diversity of People taking care of the Heath.

18. The proposed fees and charges support the three objectives and outcomes set out in the Open Spaces Business Plan 2022-23 (a) Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible, (b) Spaces enrich people's lives and (c) Business practices are responsible and sustainable.

Financial Implications

19. 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.

Legal Implications

20. Hampstead Heath (Charity No. 803392) is a registered Charity and the City of London Corporation is the corporate trustee. Members are reminded that any decision they take in respect of the Charity must be in the best interests of that Charity. The City of London Corporation has statutory powers to charge for a wide range of facilities and services. A number of issues raised by the HMPA and the KLPA during the consultation process were considered in the recent High Court case of *R (Efthimiou) v The Mayor and Commonalty and Citizens of the City of London* [2022] EWHC 1588 (Admin).

Risk Implications

21. Risks are recorded in the Natural Environment Risk Register, which forms part of the meeting agenda pack.

Equality Implications

22. A Test of Relevance has been completed in relation to the proposed fees and charges. A full Equality Analysis is not recommended.

Climate Implications

23. The City of London Corporation has a Climate Action Strategy which seeks to achieve Net 0 by 2040. There will be a range of measures implemented to realise this including increasing carbon sequestration and storage across the Open Spaces alongside biodiversity enhancement and resilience measures.

Conclusion

24. Hampstead Heath continues to provide excellent value for money sports and recreational opportunities. The income generated through fees and charges contributes towards the cost of providing sports and recreational facilities and maintaining Hampstead Heath.
25. It is proposed that the majority of charges are increased by 5%, or increased to align with relevant benchmarks, as set out in appendix 1.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Proposed Fees and Charges for 2023-24 (Hampstead Heath)
- Appendix 2 – Representations received from the HMPA, KLPA and HRFC
- Appendix 3 – Benchmarking

Contact

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