

Committee(s)	Dated:
West Ham Park Committee – For Information	01/02/2016
Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee – For Decision	01/02/2016
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee – For Information	07/03/2016
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Committee – For Information	14/03/2016
Subject: Open Spaces Department – Progress on Sports Projects and Programme Board and Partnership Agreement with the Lawn Tennis Association	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Information
Report author: Richard Gentry – North London Open Spaces	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Members on the progress which has been made with the Sports Projects and Programme Board; specifically with regard to a review of our sports provision and the development of a strategic partnership approach with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), including the development of an online tennis booking application. The report also highlights the benefits of entering a partnership with the LTA which includes access to coaches and coaching models and tennis courses for all ages and abilities and seeks Members support for this approach. The report sets out our aspiration to develop tennis activity within our Open Spaces, increase usage and increase income to deliver against identified Service Based Review savings.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this report and the progress which has been made by the Sports Programme and Project Board.
- Support a partnership approach with the Lawn Tennis Association through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London owns and manages almost 4,500 hectares of historic and natural Open Space for public recreation and health. Spaces in and beyond the Square Mile have over 23 million visits each year. They include important wildlife habitats, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves for the

public to enjoy. Within their Open Spaces the City of London provides or facilitates numerous sporting activities, both formal and informal.

2. The City of London works with a number of partners (for example: English Heritage, Football Foundation, Lee Valley Regional Park, Natural England, Royal Parks, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Sport England) to protect green spaces.

Current Position

3. In order to respond to the Open Spaces Department agreed Service Based Review (SBR) savings, a Sports Programme and Project Board was set up, led by the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath. The purpose of the Board is to; carry out a review of sports provision across Open Spaces, develop a Sports and Play Strategy for Open Spaces and consider a potential new operating model to deliver SBR savings. The Board has agreed a number of projects in order to achieve identified savings and income generating opportunities.
4. A consultant has provided analysis of the full cost of sports provision across our Open Spaces. The cost of provision of sporting activities across all Open Spaces Department is estimated at £2.4m per annum; with a corresponding income of £724,000 i.e. the net cost of service is £1.7m.
5. The Sports Programme and Project Board is currently tendering for consultants to carry out a “user and non-user” consultation. This piece of work will provide a detailed understanding of the current profile of users and views (positive and negative) users have of the sports facilities within Open Spaces. A key objective is for the Department to have information on the levels of current participation and thus, potentially how participation can be maintained and increased. A second objective is to understand the reasons and barriers that exist for non-users and how we can provide future opportunities to encourage non-users to participate.
6. The research will inform the future development of the Sport and Physical Activity Framework and will be used to set measureable outcomes and annual targets for increased participation.
7. An identified SBR saving was to develop and introduce an online booking system that could be accessed by the user on a variety of devices (smart phone, PC or tablet). The saving associated with staff time and an increase in income would contribute to the SBR savings.
8. The Open Spaces Department is responsible for the management and maintenance of 34 tennis courts across four Open Spaces. These courts are located at:
 - **West Ham Park** 12 courts
 - **Parliament Hill Fields** 10 courts
 - **Golders Hill Park** 6 courts (2 grass, 4 tarmac)
 - **Queen’s Park** 6 courts

9. Currently staff book and administer the booking of tennis courts. This process requires staff to be in attendance when users want to book, pay or play for a tennis court or be at the end of a phone for set periods of time. In excess of 5,400 hours of staff time are spent in the facilitation (face to face or over the phone bookings) to provide access to tennis courts across our Open Spaces. This equates to £107,500 in staff costs (April 2014 – March 2015).

Opportunities

10. The Open Spaces Department encourages participation in sport and physical activity to promote healthy and active lifestyles.
11. In partnership with the LTA, there is an opportunity to access the LTA ClubSpark online tennis booking system. The ClubSpark system enables users to book tennis courts using a PC, smartphone or tablet. The system can be set up to take payments online and court bookings and membership can be managed by various modules in the application.
12. The benefits of using the ClubSpark application include:
 - Customers will be able to book tennis courts online for their preferred site without having to attend the park.
 - Flexible use of the staff resource, not tied to tennis booking huts for long periods.
 - Reduce the need for casual staff used during the summer months.
 - Data collection of users, including age, sex and location – will provide user demographics e.g. to support the development of coaching programmes and activities which meet the needs of our customers.
 - Data on the system would be City of London data
 - Sportlabs/ClubSpark act as a data processor
 - The City of London remains the data owner
 - LTA get anonymised data from the system
 - LTA get personal details if a user consents to it when creating an account on the system
 - Opportunity for booking applications to be used to promote relevant Open Spaces information, including marketing of events.
13. ClubSpark is free software for all LTA registered venues. To register all four City of London Open Spaces with the LTA in year 1 would cost £200 per site. Ongoing maintenance and updates would be funded by the LTA.

Lawn Tennis Association Partnership

14. The London & South East region identified 12 “fast track” local authorities and strategic partners in 2015 based on current participation levels and latent demand in those areas, with a view to securing long term partnerships with the respective local authority, the LTA has allocated staff and financial resources accordingly. The City of London is one of those 12 fast track areas.
15. The LTA can provide a revenue investment package to support the delivery of long term strategic partnership and relevant business model. The LTA can also

provide advice and guidance on an effective and efficient coaching model for the Open Spaces Department, which could increase income.

16. The Open Spaces Department is always seeking efficiencies as well as reviewing how it manages its tennis facilities. Specifically, online tennis has been identified as an area where the service could be improved, savings could be made and additional income generated.
17. A strategic partnership and registration with the LTA will provide the Open Spaces Department with access to an online tennis booking application called 'ClubSpark'.

Progress

18. In order to seek the views and inform stakeholders a period of engagement was carried out with our tennis users and non-users by an external consultant. Face to face interviews, focus group and telephone interviews took place. An executive summary of this consultation exercise is provided at Appendix 1. This work was funded by the LTA. The results of the consultation exercise will help inform a set of recommendations that will be presented to City of London stakeholders for consideration; forming part of the wider consultation process with users and non-users of our sports facilities.
19. West Ham Park has produced a tennis development plan in order to deliver their aim of "creating a more active lifestyle for local residents through increased tennis participation". This will be achieved by:
 - a. Refurbishing 9 courts and completing cyclical improvements within budget and in time for the start of the 2016 summer season (May 2016).
 - b. Introducing on-line booking system for use of the courts for informal play and organised coaching (May 2016).
 - c. Delivering a mixed programme of tennis coaching, activities and leagues which increase the number of people using the courts.
 - d. Using targeted marketing to ensure that membership mix represents local community diversity.
20. Three of West Ham Parks twelve courts were resurfaced to a high standard in 2013, the remaining 9 courts are in a poor condition. The cost of resurfacing the courts is £285,000. The City Surveyor had identified £200,000 funding through the Annual Work Programme and the West Ham Park Manager has been successful in applying for a grant of £85,000k from the LTA to fund the remainder of the Project. The refurbishment of the tennis courts is expected to be completed by the end of April to allow the courts to be opened in May 2016.

Next Steps

21. The ClubSpark application will be developed further with support from the LTA.
22. Staff in the Open Spaces Department will assist in the development of arrangements e.g. times/days that advanced bookings can be made, when

coaching sessions can be delivered and when courts will be closed for routine maintenance.

23. Training would be delivered by the LTA to ensure staff who interact with our tennis users are competent in the booking process and are able to use the application and its functions effectively.
24. Queen's Park will approach the LTA in 2016/17 (subject to Additional Work Programme budget) to seek a grant to assist with the refurbishment of its six tennis courts.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

25. The Sports Programme will be the mechanism for the delivery of sports, both formal and informal, across the Open Spaces Divisions meeting the Departmental objective to: *'Improve the health and wellbeing of community through access to green space and recreation'*. The Sports Programme also meets the Open Spaces Department Charitable objectives of; *'The preservation of our open spaces for the recreation and enjoyment of the public'*.
26. The Sports Programme also supports the City of London strategic aim; *To provide valued services, such as education, employment, culture and leisure, to London and the nation.* (Corporate Plan 2015 – 19).

Implications

27. **Financial Implications** – Any financial costs to deliver the Sports projects are being met from Open Spaces Local Risk Budgets. Additional funding through the LTA will be considered in the future to support the refurbishment. Currently the Open Spaces Department recovers 38% of costs through tennis, as an activity in the Open Spaces.
28. The Sports Programme will help contribute to the departmental savings identified as part of the corporate SBR process. The Online Tennis Booking Project has an identified SBR saving of £20,000. A reduction in the use of casual staff and increased income through membership and usage of the tennis courts will assist in the delivery of these savings.

Conclusion

29. It is important to encourage physical activity in our Open Spaces; one way of achieving this is by supporting people to play tennis and increasing usage on our tennis courts. The City of London, Open Spaces Department aspires to see an increase in sports participation. Introducing the right business model will support the City of London in delivering tennis court facilities that are sustainable and accessible for future generations.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Executive Summary – City of London Tennis User and Non User Consultation.

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Appendix 1.

Executive Summary – City of London Tennis User and Non User Consultation

- Of the 135 users interviewed 69% were male and 31% female
- The largest age category was the 45-65 group, with 43% falling into this, followed by the 25-45 year olds, who made up 41%
- 73% of the sample stated they only played at this location
- In terms of frequency of playing 80% stated that they played at least once a month or more, with 19% playing regularly but less than once a month
- In terms of satisfaction levels, the highest levels were for the “accessibility” of the court, the courts themselves and the VFM of the courts, the lowest levels were for the booking system and “other facilities around the courts”
- When asked if they would be willing to pay for improved services such as improved booking, 28% said “yes definitely”, with a further 33% saying “perhaps/maybe”
- There was significant interest in coaching, with 39% saying they were interested in “one to one” sessions and another 39% saying interested in “group coaching”
- Only 16% stated that they currently participated in competitions, with 48% stating that they would be interested in taking part in them, either occasionally or on a regular basis
- The feedback from staff was generally one of concern/suspicion about the introduction of an online booking system, as they felt that this would impinge on the level of service to the end user, although some of them could see that the introduction of a better booking system was necessary
- Equally some customers from the focus groups were concerned that the introduction of an online booking system would mean less “face to face” personal service on site. There seem to be some “informal” procedures, that both customers and staff like, and that do seem to work for both parties, however this may not be the best system/procedures in terms of effectiveness and increasing usage/income
- Most staff and stakeholders felt that there were real opportunities to increase usage through improved coaching opportunities, and the introduction of more structure sessions, ladders/leagues etc.