

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Enterprise, Strategic Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: 21 January 2014

DIRECTOR: Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT: Management of events in Aberdeen's parks and open spaces

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/13/186

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Committee of the issues related to the management of events within Council owned parks and open spaces and to seek their approval for recommendations aimed at improving the future management of such events.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. To note the current arrangements in place within City Events to manage Aberdeen's parks and open spaces.
2. To support the revised pricing structure detailed in this report and acknowledge the agreed working relationship between City Events, the Grounds Maintenance Management Team and Environmental Services that ensures that Aberdeen's parks and open spaces are maintained to the highest standard for ongoing event use.
3. To agree a 10% increase in charges annually from April 2014 onwards, until a further report is brought to this committee in the future seeking an amendment to this agreement.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Monies totaling £908,850 were secured from the ESP & I revenue budget and the Common Good Fund to deliver a dynamic but compact programme of City Events for Aberdeen in 2014-15, including the management of Aberdeen's parks and open spaces and staffing costs which currently exist within the departments revenue budget.

The issues associated with charging event organisers for the use of parks and open spaces in Aberdeen is addressed in the Main Issues section of this report.

In 2012-2013 all event applications were considered using set criteria (see appendix 1). Daily charges were introduced that related to these criteria, costs ranged from £250, £500, £1000.

From April 2013 to March 2014, £26,500 was raised from the hire charges associated with Aberdeen's parks and open spaces. There has not been a hire charge increase since 2012, while the costs of suppliers, infrastructure etc continue to increase and can no longer be sustained by existing budgets.

The proposed charges for 2014-2015 are £275, £550, £1100 which represents an increase of 10%.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Staffing

In relation to safe event delivery, the individual officers in City Events have attained specialist skills and training in support of the City Council's requirement to meet the standards expected within current Health and Safety legislation and also The Event Safety Guide – A Guide to Health, Safety and Welfare at Music and Similar Events, commonly known as "The Purple Guide".

The management of parks and open spaces is currently delivered by one Events Officer graded at G12 within the City Events Team. This officer has lead responsibilities to deliver the management of the parks and open spaces within the City Events programme.

Following approval of the City Events Programme 2014-15 at the ESP&I Committee on 12th November 2013, it has been agreed that a new post graded at G10 will be created to manage the existing occupancy of Aberdeen's parks and open spaces and to generate additional use, increasing monies available to maintain and develop the existing portfolio of spaces used for event delivery.

This will free up the G12 staffing resource currently undertaking this role and provide additional capacity within the team to develop the existing events programme and attract new events for the benefit of the city in the future.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Management of Parks and Open Spaces

Traditionally, our public parks and open spaces have been used to host a wide variety of mainly open air events, and Aberdeen is no different in that respect from the rest of the UK.

Each year, the parks and open spaces in Aberdeen host a wide range of events and these can range from the large traditional Highland Games to smaller-scale community organised galas and charitable events.

In 2013/14, there were 104 individual events hosted in the city's parks and open spaces, all of which directly or indirectly involved the City Events Team. The breakdown of these are as follows:

- 8 – Directly managed and supported by City Events
- 12 – Directly supported by City Events
- 84 – Externally managed but overseen by City Events

The Management of the city's parks and open Spaces is facilitated through the City Events Team in partnership with the city's Grounds Maintenance Management Team and Environmental Services.

This is an historical agreement, with Service approval being reached in 1997 between the then Arts and Recreation services of Community Recreation and Grounds Maintenance to ensure a co-ordinated approach to parks and open spaces management.

All applications deemed as an "Event", i.e. an occurrence happening at a determinable time and place, are assessed, consultation is carried out with all interested parties and involved agencies, and relevant permission or refusal is given by Events Officers, in each individual case striving to achieve the Council target of acknowledgement of application within 3 working days, and permission or refusal within 15 working days of receipt of application.

Permission is given after stringent background investigation and consideration, usually involving partner agencies such as Police Scotland, and there are relatively few refusals on the basis that most applications enhance the existing vibrant parks and open spaces programme.

On the rare occasion that refusal is determined; the Event Organiser is given, in writing, a full and detailed explanation of the grounds of refusal.

However, ever growing demand for use of the city's parks and open spaces has taken a toll on the maintenance of these areas, and it was agreed to introduce a pricing structure from 1 April 2012, to contribute to ongoing and daily maintenance costs.

Each event incurs a minimum daily hire charge, regardless of status - charity, corporate, private or otherwise.

A copy of the 2014/15 pricing structure is included as Appendix 1, along with the parks and open spaces event

policy statement managed under the auspices of the City Events Team.

The rates quoted were arrived at after consultation with other local authorities on their procedures and the fees charged for use of similar parks and open spaces.

Any regular bookings deemed as “commercial” lets, such as keep fit outdoor classes, kayaking in the Duthie Park boating pond, bungee trampoline activities etc, are managed under the auspices of Environmental Services, as they are not deemed to be “events”.

6. IMPACT

Corporate

Aberdeen – the Smarter City

- We will promote Aberdeen as a great place to live, bring up a family, do business and visit.
- We will ensure that Union Street regains its position as the heart of the city and move cultural activity centre-stage through re-invigorated cultural leadership.
- We will challenge inequalities wherever they exist and bring our communities closer together.

Smarter Living (Quality of Life)

- We aspire to be recognised as a City of Culture, a place of excellence for culture and arts by promoting Aberdeen as a cultural centre hosting high quality diverse cultural events for the whole community and beyond.

Smarter Economy (Competitiveness)

- We will work with partners to promote the city as a place to invest, live, work and export from.

Community Plan

- Work with other organisations, agencies and groups, including Visit Scotland and Visit Aberdeen, to encourage tourism and the provision of facilities for tourists.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

See Appendix 1

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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APPENDIX 1

Charges for Events held in ACC parks and open spaces, streets, roads and squares 2014/15

All event applications will be considered using the criteria and descriptors below. Each event will be awarded A, B or C status and a corresponding rate applied to all days the event occupies the area.

The charge for each event will be on a daily basis as follows:

Grade A event will be charged at £1100 per day

Grade B event will be charged at £550 per day

Grade C event will be charged at £275 per day

Descriptor	A	B	C
PROFILE (public profile of the event)	High	Medium	Low
IMPACT (the impact on venue or the surrounding area)	Large impact	Medium impact	Low or minimal impact

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPANTS	Large numbers expected. (2000+)	Small to medium numbers expected. (500 to 2000)	Small or low numbers expected. (Up to500)
EVENT DELIVERY LEVEL	Requires a full multi agency approach with event and contingency plans produced and agreed by all city partners.	City Events Officer input plus Special Events Working Group (SEWG) and other Council Departments.	Single City Events Officer input with support from appropriate Environmental Services Officer.
ACTIVITY TYPE	Multi faceted and disciplined.	2 – 3 disciplines/activities.	Single discipline/activity.

The following factors will be taken into consideration when grading an event

PROFILE

International/national/regional/city wide/local community/local group

Level and profile of any VIP involvement ie Royalty/government/overseas

Artists and entertainers

Economic benefits to the city

Alcohol at the event

TV and media interest

IMPACT

Level of disruption to the local infrastructure, other users, businesses and residents

Road closures/restrictions/diversions

Public transport and car parking

Set up/derig times

Access/egress for all

Accessibility

Day v evening v night

Moving v static event

Time of year

Fireworks/carnival or fun fair/motor sport/helicopters/parachute display

Noise pollution

Financial viability of event (insurances, ticket sales, entry fees)

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPANTS	Over 2000 v 500 to 2000 v up to 500 Standing/seating/mixed Family groups v young adults v elderly v children and teenagers v rival factions
VENUE(S)	Indoor v outdoor Confined single location v widespread location v multi locations Temporary structures
LEVEL OF EVENT DELIVERY	Full multi agency approach to single Events Officer involvement Event and contingency plans with full risk assessments, health and safety, traffic management, command and control, Event Safety Co-ordinator, on and off site meetings, professional stewarding, medical and welfare
NATURE AND TYPE OF EVENT	Multi v 2-3 v single disciplined event. This can cover locations, stages, performances, activities and days High Rating - Music festival/large concert/aviation/marine/motor/large shows/New Year celebrations/large demonstrations/large parades and processions/political/large fireworks displays/10k and upward runs/highland games/camping element Medium Rating – Galas/markets/smaller parades and processions, shows, walks, sponsored activities Low Rating – very small walks/fun days/sponsored activities

There are no plans to introduce any charges for those events that encompass very small numbers (up to 50) that want to use our areas for sponsored walks/toddles/educational purposes.

City Events Staffing Charge

It is recognised that as part of our standard delivery of supporting non ACC events, there are elements within our work programme that should not be charged back to events organisers. These elements are outlined below:

-Sending out application forms
-Receiving application forms
-Checking application forms and if required, contacting event organiser for further information
-Adding event to events list, festival websites etc.
-One or two face to face meetings on or off site, telephone contact, email contact to discuss event and agree level of City Events involvement and cost. These meetings will also determine what paperwork is required and agreed to be submitted.
-Sending letter of permission/refusal

Over and above these elements, there will be a charge of **£40 per hour** for any City Events Officer that is required to support the delivery of non ACC events. This is inclusive of mileage costs.

CITY OF ABERDEEN MAIN PARKS & OPEN SPACES

Introduction

Aberdeen has large parks (Duthie Park, Hazlehead Park, Westburn Park, Seaton Park, Beach, Kings/Queens Links, Stewart Park, Walker Park and Union Terrace Gardens) that can be used for major events. There are other smaller parks (Johnston Gardens, Rubislaw and Queens Terrace Gardens, Bon Accord Terrace Gardens and Allan Park) that can be used for smaller niche events.

The parks are without exception the pride of the city, winning both British and European Bloom competitions over many decades. These parks are well used by both citizen and visitors alike, and the average footfall over peak periods, especially summer months, can be measured in the thousands.

Despite their capacity to absorb large scale events, it needs to be recognised that, due to the largely soft infrastructure of parks, they are also vulnerable to damage caused by over-use, such as compaction and surface wear. Accidental damage through carelessness or lack of awareness by event organisers can also cause damage to surfaces and features e.g. gateposts, fences and rutting of grass surfaces.

Strategic Factors

The Aberdeen Parks and Greenspace Strategy 2005 contains the following objective in relation to events within the Economy section of the strategy.

EC5 Support the city's open-air events strategy through identification of infrastructure needs and extension of the events programme.

The aim will be delivered through the following tasks:

EC5.1 Improve the infrastructure and access to selected sites to accommodate events with minimal disruption and damage.

EC5.2 Develop new events which promote the positive use of parks and green spaces.

Event Policy Statement

1 Location

Events will be dispersed throughout the main parks which are considered suitable for such use. The individual characteristics of a park such as its capacity in terms of spectator/participant numbers, parking and other ancillary requirements will determine its suitability for a particular event.

2 Frequency

The frequency of events in parks will be controlled to protect the fabric and infrastructure of the park from repeated and intensive use. In general terms, there should be an interval of two weeks between events using the same area of a park as more frequent use may cause damage to the park's infrastructure. It is recognised however that events may take place more frequently during the summer months and that the use of parks for events in the winter months is more limited.

3 Priority

Priority will be given to Aberdeen City Council organised events that meet the event planning requirements (11 Event Planning). Events that are for local community benefit and commercial events that will bring an economic benefit to the city and the area that it is being held. Events that fit within the yearly events calendar. Yearly events calendar to allow various types of activities and sized events to work in harmony within the city throughout the year,

4 Timing

Public events must finish by 9.00pm Monday – Sunday especially where amplified music and/or announcements are being made. Exceptions may be made with Committee approval.

Private events such as dinner dances, where they are being held in an enclosed space such as a marquee, can take place no more than twice a month and no more than six times a year in any given park. All events must be finished by 12.00 midnight on Friday and Saturday and by 9.00pm, Sunday to Thursday. The preferred venue for such events will be the games field at Hazlehead.

5 Amplification

It is recognised that amplification is an essential part of many events through PA announcement, amplified music and entertainment and also has an essential role in making health and safety announcements to large audiences, should the need arise. Amplified music however, will only be permitted where it is integral to the nature of the event and must satisfy the Council's policy on noise abatement. The decibels of the music or other noise must be measured at the perimeter of the park nearest the residents. The dB(A) must not exceed those set by the Council or the existing legislation (whichever is the lowest).

6 Management

The event organiser will be required to sign a management agreement with the Council detailing the conduct and operational constraints which will apply to the event. The Council will supply detailed and supplementary information in support of the management agreement as it sees fit. This will include arrangements for residents parking where necessary. Should the organiser fail to conduct their event within the constraints outlined, future permission for use will not be granted.

7 Charging

There will be a scale of charges laid down by the Council for the use of the park or open space which will be dependant on the nature of the event. Added to this will be a cost, where required, for the Council's time in managing the event to ensure that all stages of the event are implemented as per the agreement with the organiser.

8 Indemnification

The event organiser will be required to have the necessary insurance in place to meet any public liability arising from their event.

9 Reinstatement

Event organisers will be liable for the reinstatement of any damage or loss to the park facilities as a result of their event. In the case of large public or private events, a bond will be required to be deposited with the Council in advance of the event taking place which will be retained if there is damage to the park facilities.

10 Events

Events come in all sizes and offer various activities for free, charity fund raising, corporate function or for financial gain. It is proposed that the mix of events be looked at and that a range of events of various sizes and activities be programmed into the parks and open spaces yearly hires. Consideration regarding the type of event, attendance size, status of event (corporate, charity public, charity private, commercial) frequency of event (more than once in that year) should be looked at regarding the application to use the parks and open spaces. A protection of the parks and open spaces should be looked at from both use of the infrastructure and also from the support of local citizens, so local events are not disadvantaged due to larger national organisers organising an event either on or near their own event or because they have booked the venue. A national charity organiser or commercial organiser who does not have a registered address in the City or do not directly contribute to the local community of Aberdeen may be refused a hire of the city's parks and open spaces or have restrictions placed on them.

11 Event Planning

The organiser will be required to produce a detailed outline of their event which should contain an event specific risk assessment, an event plan and contingency plan. These plans along with detailed scaled maps should be available to be presented to the Special Events Working Group (SEWG) on request. This group will give additional advise to the organiser and to the City Events Team in relation to their event request. Only when the City Events Officer and SEWG have had their concerns addressed would the hirer be advised to apply for any relevant licenses for that event and only when proof of the appropriate licenses and insurances have been produced to the City Events Officer will permission be granted to use the area requested.

12 Licences

The event organiser is responsible for attaining the appropriate licences in an appropriate time scale before their event. These licences must be produced before the event at a time agreed with City Events before permission is granted to use the requested venue. Appropriate licences could be Public Entertainment Licence, PRS, Street Traders Licence, Market Operators Licence, Charity Collection Licence, Occasional Licence (alcohol).

13 Political /pressure/protest groups

Applications on behalf of political /pressure/protest groups are currently treated in the same equitable way as any other requests for use of Parks and Open spaces.

Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee on Tuesday 11th September 2012 agreed that the Castlegate is **the** historic location within Aberdeen that can be used for political party and similar events.