

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE:	<b>Education, Culture and Sport</b>
DATE:	<b>18 February 2010</b>
DIRECTOR:	<b>Annette Bruton</b>
TITLE OF REPORT:	<b>Bookings and Lettings Review</b>
REPORT NUMBER:	<b>ECS/10/15</b>

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides an update on the progress of the bookings and lettings review and presents to Committee proposals for consideration. It also sets out the terms of the revised Bookings and Letting Policy and Procedures for approval.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Committee considers the proposals and approves the key elements of a revised Bookings and Lettings Policy and Procedures, as set out below:

- 1) That both the Sports Bookings and Educational Lettings system be brought together into a single more customer focused, integrated system.
- 2) Officers continue to explore options to progress the procurement of an electronic Leisure Management System.
- 3) That Officers progress discussions with staff and Trade Unions about options for the deployment of janitorial cover, and bring a further report to a future meeting of the Committee.
- 4) That Officers develop alternative options for staffing facilities, in the event that full janitorial cover is not possible, and bring these options in a further report to a future meeting of the Committee.
- 5) That, wherever possible, lets are allocated into a reduced number of buildings, in line with the principles set out in section 5 of the report.
- 6) That Charging Categories based on the size and type of the facility being used, are introduced for use of all sports and educational establishments, as set out in section 6 of the report.
- 7) That charges are applied in line with the Charging Rates relative to the majority nature of the Group using the facility as set out in section 7 of the report.
- 8) That applications for Lets be considered in line with the Access Priorities set out in section 7 of the report.

- 9) That all groups hiring facilities for coaching and tuition purposes be required to provide evidence of insurance and coaching qualifications, within a 2 year period.
- 10) That the City Council and Sport Aberdeen sign up to the 2006 Accord, as a means of demonstrating best practice in relation to the protection of children within facilities operated through the revised Bookings and Lettings System.
- 11) That Officers report to a future meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on the outcome of a review of the Access to Leisure Scheme.
- 12) That 10% of the income for use of Schools and Community Centres is paid to the establishments, in recognition of the additional costs resulting from external lets.
- 13) That Officers report to a future meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on the outcome of a review of the Corporate Budget.
- 14) That the revised Bookings and Lettings policy and procedures be progressed in time for implementation in August 2010.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The review seeks to improve the quality of the service provided from a customer perspective, while ensuring improvements in efficiency of delivery, therefore achieving revenue budgetary efficiencies.

The budget for Janitorial overtime to support lettings in educational establishments for 2009/10 is £333,000, though due to the volume of lets and facilities involved, these budgets have historically been overspent for a number of years.

The budget for Income from lettings within educational establishments for 2009/10 is £309,347, which includes approximately £140,000, which is funded from the Corporate Lettings Budget, managed by Corporate Governance.

In addition to the above, there are significant 'hidden costs' relating to heating, lighting and wear and tear to buildings and equipment within schools and community learning and development facilities, which are not easy to identify, given that they are part of the overall running costs of the establishments. In 2008, an external audit by Henderson Loggie, estimated that the energy costs alone amounted to an average of just under £21 per hour of use within educational establishments (based on 2006/07 costs).

Should the recommendations be approved, it is anticipated that in 2010/2011 there would be an increase of £40,000 may be achievable through increase in income, assuming the customer base remains stable; and a reduction in expenditure of £50,000 primarily through the more efficient use of janitorial provision, the rationalisation of the number of buildings available for hire, and reprogramming of activity throughout the city.

#### **4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The report relates to the Arts, Heritage and Sport strand of the Community Plan, specifically in relation to the Sports, Leisure and Recreation vision of developing Aberdeen as an “Active City” and in relation to ensuring that our Community has ‘access to services of a high quality that meet their needs.’ under the ‘We value our people’ strand and Single Outcome Agreement Outcomes 6, ‘We live longer, healthier lives’ and 13, ‘We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.’

The report also links to Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking through Culture, Arts and Sport:

- Increase participation in sport, provide support for athletes and reward excellence
- Ensure high quality, well managed sports facilities in Aberdeen
- Recognise the contribution of Sport, Culture and Arts to promoting the area as a tourist destination
- Recognise the role of Sport and Arts in tackling anti-social behaviour

The report relates to Fit for the Future, a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Aberdeen City 2009-2015, which has 5 key objectives:

- Promote and increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for everyone in Aberdeen
- Provide a comprehensive and high quality range of sports facilities in Aberdeen City Council
- Maximise the social, educational, health and economic benefits of sport and physical activity in Aberdeen City
- Develop and sustain pathways which nurture local, regional and national sporting people to reach their potential
- Raise the profile of sport in Aberdeen

The report also links to the draft Learning Strategy; draft Cultural Strategy, Vibrant Aberdeen, and the Aberdeen City Council Out of School Care Policy 2008.

#### **5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Detailed proposals in relation to more efficient use of janitorial provision, or alternative options for staffing lets during evenings and weekend, will require further consultation with staff and Trade Unions.

#### **6. REPORT**

##### Background

The review of Bookings and Lettings policy and procedures has been an area of development which has been scheduled for completion for several years. The current Letting of Educational Establishment Policy has been in operation since 2000.

At the Council meeting on 13 February 2008, the recommendations of the Sports Transformation Programme were approved. The Sports Transformation Programme was part of a wider initiative that sought to identify service improvements which would ensure that the City's residents receive the best possible services within the challenges of the current financial climate. A specific area of the programme related to the review of bookings and lettings. The need to consolidate disparate bookings, lettings and charging policies and procedures to meet the requirements and expectations was identified and ten separate recommendations were approved, with the general objective being the implementation of one single integrated booking system for all sports and educational establishments.

The key elements of the Transformation Programme were as follows:

1. Implement a single integrated bookings system.
2. Progress the procurement of a Leisure Management System as a priority.
3. Investigate the options for deployment of janitorial cover.
4. Investigate different options for staffing facilities where appropriate.
5. Rationalise venues available for hire through a strategic approach to the administration of bookings.
6. Develop and implement a standardised charging system based on type/category of facility.
7. Develop a charging policy which defines user categories and priorities.
8. Standardise quality assurance requirements of groups applying for facilities.
9. Sign up to 2006 Accord for the Protection of Children in Scottish Sport by 2009.
10. Carry out and implement an Access to Leisure Review.

The proposed timescale for implementation is August 2010, in order to coincide with the start of the new academic year for educational establishments. This timescale also enables the new Sports Trust, Sport Aberdeen, which will be managing bookings and lettings for both sports and educational establishments, to be fully established prior to implementation.

In addition to the Transformation Programme, two other pieces of work were undertaken specifically with reference to the Letting of Educational Establishments. An External Audit in 2008, together with an Internal Audit in January 2009 both highlighted recommendations with reference to the lettings process, and the recommendations seek to address these issues.

A Bookings and Lettings Officer Working Group, consisting of the key services involved has been in operation since November 2009 to drive forward the Review, and ensure that specific areas of work are completed in line with the implementation date identified.

### Consultation

It is imperative within any Review that adequate consultation is undertaken with key stakeholders, including facility users, head teachers, facility management staff, childcare partnership, Sport Aberdeen, trade unions, and Education, Culture and Sport committee members.

An Education, Culture and Sport Committee members' workshop was held on 15 December 2009 to provide the opportunity for input from committee members, in advance of the formal recommendations being presented.

Two open consultation meetings were held on the evenings of the 12 and 13 January 2010 in order to provide facility users with more detailed information regarding the review proposals, and allow them the opportunity to input to the process. Notification for the meetings was by individual letters, and through a press release in the local papers. The meetings were attended by over 60 individuals, representing approximately 40 groups, and as well as feedback taken during the meetings, groups were invited to submit written comments, particularly on the potential impact of the proposals on their groups by the end of January. Feedback has been incorporated into the report under the 10 individual headings.

A follow-up Workshop was held for Education, Culture and Sport Committee members on 3 February 2010 to enable committee members to receive feedback from the consultation, and allow them to input to the final proposals, with greater knowledge of the potential impact of the proposals on users groups.

Whilst both primary and secondary head teachers have been included in the officer working group which has been leading this review, further engagement took place with primary head teachers at one of the quarterly head teacher meetings on 21 January 2010 and with secondary head teachers on 4 February 2010.

Consultation was also undertaken with Aberdeen Sports Council, Active Schools, and Active Communities.

Particularly in relation to the issues of janitorial staffing relating to lets (as covered in section 3 and 4) early discussions have taken place with trade union representatives and these will continue over coming months as this work progresses.

## Recommendations and Proposals

### **1. Implement a single integrated bookings system.**

#### Rationale

This recommendation represents the overarching objective of the Review, which is to bring together the two disparate systems, of the Sports Facilities Booking System and the Letting System for Educational Establishments, (including Schools and Community Centres) to provide a more customer focused service.

#### Proposal

Whilst both the Sports Bookings and Educational Lettings are now managed by one team, which will be transferring to Sport Aberdeen later this year, the intention is to bring the two systems together into a single system, with the aim of providing a much improved level of customer service. This will mean that, when a member of the public, or group enquires about a particular type of facility, staff will be able to provide a range of options across all educational, community learning and sports facilities, (for example, if a space in a Sports Centre is not available, groups could be offered facilities within Schools or Community Centres, or vice versa).

Alongside developing these proposals, an audit has also taken place of the facilities and supporting equipment available within educational establishments, in order to assist the Lettings Team provide a more tailored service for groups seeking particular facilities. The result is that Team will now have a much better awareness and knowledge of the relevant sizes, layout, restrictions and equipment, relating to each facility, which should mean that they can direct groups to the most appropriate facilities, to meet their specific needs.

This proposal also builds on experience within other local authorities, which have been through similar reviews, including Aberdeenshire Council, on the basis that many groups may operate across both City and Shire, and there are therefore significant benefits in having similar schemes to avoid unnecessary confusion, (for example, using similar definitions of types of groups and age categories).

#### Consultation Feedback

Feedback about the principle of a single integrated lettings system was generally very positive, with a significant number of users indicating that they could see many potential benefits of a more unified, and customer-focused system. There were a few minor concerns about whether this was primarily being driven by budgetary and financial constraints, and a number of existing users indicated that the current letting system can be somewhat inflexible.

## **2. Progress the procurement of a Leisure Management System as a priority.**

Funding had been identified in the Non-Housing Capital Programme to procure an electronic Leisure Management System, in order to provide an integrated online bookings, database and management information system. Work had been undertaken during the early part of 2009 in relation to developing a specification and starting the tendering process; however as part of the review of the non-housing capital programme in May 2009, this element was removed from the capital allocation.

Officers within the Working Group have identified that the lack of a electronic leisure management system is likely to limit some of the potential benefits of the Review, (including efficiency, quality of customer service, and availability of management information), and would therefore propose that further work takes place to investigate the potential for such a system, if a single integrated booking system is to be efficient. Members attending the Committee Members Workshop also agreed that this issue should continue to be progressed, if at all possible. The need for an electronic Leisure Management System was also supported by an Internal Audit report in January 2009, particularly in relation to being able to provide appropriate quarterly performance monitoring reports on lettings.

#### Consultation Feedback

There was agreement in the consultation meetings that having an electronic Leisure Management System would help provide a more efficient service, and should be progressed.

### **3. Investigate the options for deployment of janitorial cover.**

#### Rationale

Currently the operation of the majority of educational facility lets require janitorial services to be present and responsible for the health and safety requirements. This work is undertaken after 6.00pm and weekends as part of voluntary overtime and is not reflected in the core duties in the janitorial job description, and therefore requires to be paid at enhanced rates.

The budget for janitorial overtime attributed to lets is on average considerably more than the income generated from lets. In addition, because the provision of janitorial cover during evenings and weekends is all done on a voluntary basis, there can often be difficulties in getting adequate staff to volunteer, particularly since recent restructuring and reduction in staff across Facilities Management. This can mean that either lets cannot be staffed, or it can take a significant amount of time to be able to confirm staffing cover, and therefore confirm that lets can go ahead.

#### Proposal

The proposal is to consider the working pattern of the janitorial service, giving consideration to the employment of dedicated part time or casual janitorial staff to cover the letting in the evenings from 6.00pm - 10.00pm and at weekends. This would mean that these staff would be committed to covering evening and weekend lets, rather than these hours simply being 'tagged onto' their day jobs, and should also mean that staff could be paid at 'flat rate', rather than at enhanced overtime rates. By contracting staff to a set of agreed hours, this would enable the City Council to commit to being able to open and staff a range of buildings between 6.00 – 10.00pm on weekdays, and as required at weekends, and therefore actively promote these potential 'opening hours' for each facility, so that groups applying for lets would know what was available, rather than simply responding to requests.

#### Consultation Feedback

Whilst initial discussions have taken place on these proposals, it is recognised that more detailed work needs to take place, including consultation with relevant staff and Trade Unions. It was therefore not appropriate to discuss this proposal at any level of detail within the public consultation. There was however general support for the principle of specific times identified for lets, particularly as a number of groups indicated that they had previously not been able to get the lets they required due to staff not being available

The fact that further work is still required in relation to janitorial cover should not however delay the potential implementation of the revised lettings procedures, and it is intended that this work continues in tandem with the roll-out of the new arrangements, with a further report being presented once details are clearer, in advance of implementation in August 2010.

### **4. Investigate different options for staffing facilities where appropriate.**

#### Rationale

In line with the review of janitorial services, other options can be considered for the operational management of buildings and the letting process, in the event that

the above proposals for contracted evening and weekend janitors are not viable, or in order to make greater efficiencies in relation to potential staffing costs.

#### Proposal

Currently limited key holder provision is in operation. It is proposed, dependant on risk assessment, to explore opportunities for key holder access where appropriate, (e.g. sports pavilions and changing accommodation). Currently key holder and staff access is being looked at as part of the review of community learning centres. In addition, opportunities to utilise Leisure Attendants at suitable facilities should be explored.

#### Consultation Feedback

As above only initial discussions have taken place on these proposals, and it is recognised that more detailed work needs to take place, including consultation with relevant staff and Trade Unions. For this reason, these proposals were only briefly mentioned as part of the public consultation.

There was however some interest from a number of user groups in the potential for key holder access, though it was pointed out that this may only be an option for certain smaller, or more self-contained buildings, where security and access could be easily controlled. It is also recognised that further work is required as a part of the Community Learning Hubs.

### **5. Rationalise venues available for hire through a strategic approach to the administration of bookings.**

#### Rationale

The recommendations of both an external audit in 2008 and an internal audit in 2009 relating to the letting of Educational Establishments highlighted the need to be more efficient with regards to the utilisation of both the number and type of buildings for let. An interim review in 2008 rationalised the number of buildings available for let and this has helped to highlight the groups who may require particular assistance in being allocated appropriate accommodation.

In 2008/2009 there were over 90 different buildings in use through the Educational Lettings procedure, many of which had no more than one or two lets per week. There is a risk that with this number of facilities this does not allow for the effective use of the estate. This is particularly the case in staffing lets, where as a result of the issues set out in section 3 and 4 above, it is often difficult to secure adequate janitorial staff to cover all the lets.

The principle now being proposed is to focus on more suitable buildings which can provide the best possible facilities, as well as maximising the use of space.

#### Proposal

The proposal is to focus usage on the larger, more extensive and fit for purpose facilities as follows:

**3Rs buildings** - use of these new purpose-built facilities should be maximised, not only due to the fact that they offer the most up-to-date, and 'state of the art' school and community buildings within the Council's responsibility, but also because the contractual agreement in place between the operators means that



the City Council has use of a large bank of hours for letting purposes, at a more cost effective rate than Council operated facilities.

**Academies** – in addition to the two 3Rs Academies (Bucksburn and Cults), it is proposed that use of the remaining 10 Academies is maximised, as they all act as key focal points within their communities, and have an extensive range of facilities.

**Community Centres / Larger Primary Schools** – in addition to the above, it is proposed that within each Associated School Group, one or two of the larger Primary Schools, (dependent on demand), are identified as key facilities, which can accommodate the widest range of lets. Ideally these would be located in different locations across the ASG area, in order to provide as localised facilities as possible. The number of Primary Schools would be dependent on demand, as well as the geography of the ASG area, in order to remain local, and offer the opportunity for users to walk to facilities.

**Smaller Primary Schools** – as far as possible the proposal would be to limit the evening and weekend use of smaller, less well provided Primary Schools, in favour of the above facilities, this would not preclude out of school care prior to 6pm. However, in cases where there is not adequate capacity elsewhere, or where users are able to make a particularly strong case for continued use of these facilities, it is proposed that they are limited in the number of days on which they are opened. This may mean that users who have historically met at different times and on different evenings of the week may be encouraged to find mutually agreeable times when they can share use of the facility, thus reducing the cost of overheads, and the number of times buildings are opened.

The intention would be that the above priorities would be applied on an annual basis, in response to the annual let applications, received in April and May, for the school year starting in August, and would therefore be dictated by the level of demand.

#### Consultation

Users generally accepted the principle of reducing the number of facilities, and could see the benefits of different groups sharing buildings, rather than an individual school being opened just for one group. There were concerns raised about locations of buildings and potential travel distances, though Officers assured attendees that any rationalisation would be considered within Associated School Group (ASG) areas, and would take account of particularly large distances, as in the case of St Machar ASG. Further issues raised included concerns about the compatibility of use, (e.g. pipe bands rehearsing alongside other activities). There were also concerns raised from uniformed organisations, (such as Brownies, Rainbow and Beaver groups). This followed on from the partial rationalisation exercise undertaken in 2008, when a number of groups were relocated to unfamiliar buildings. There was a view from these groups that they needed to be close to children's homes, and ideally operate from the same Primary School that children attend. Whilst the rationale behind these concerns is not entirely clear, one potential way around this issue may be to bring a number of groups together in a smaller school on the same evening, as set out in the last of the proposals above. Overall, the principle which should be applied in relation to relocating groups should be to adopt what would be considered a 'reasonable' approach.

Consideration should also be given to any relocation of out-of-school care clubs with regards to the care commission registration requirements.

Particularly in relation to community centres, there were some concerns raised that the rationalisation of lets may lead to the possible closure of under utilised facilities.

It was also suggested that the Council should actively be promoting the space available within buildings to achieve maximum usage.

## **6. Develop and implement a standardised charging system based on type/category of facility.**

### Rationale

There are currently two charging policies in existence for the hire of facilities within the current sports bookings and lettings procedures. This leads to inequalities with regards to cost and facility access. This has been highlighted on many occasions through regular sports users' group meetings, and there is a desire to produce a more fair and equitable policy. In 2005 initial recommendations were approved by Committee and implemented to standardise charges for football pitches across the City, including those managed both by educational and sports establishments. This was well received by the various football associations within the area.

It is recognised that the potential increase in charges is one of the more sensitive areas within any review of Booking and Letting arrangements. However, it has to be accepted that, particularly in relation to the larger facilities in schools, (e.g. Games Halls), the charges have for many years been significantly lower than comparable facilities within sports facilities. In general, charges for smaller spaces, (e.g. meeting rooms and single badminton court-sized halls), are cheaper within Sports Centres, and those for larger facilities, (e.g. sports/ games halls), are considerably more expensive. The sports facilities charges do generally fall in line with national benchmarking charges, which are compiled within the annual SportScotland digest of Charges for Sports Facilities.

### Proposal

The proposal is to base the hire charges on the amount of space being used, in line with the current sports facilities charging policy. This not only reflects the majority of good practice from other local authorities, but is also in line with 'The Challenge of Charging', and the sports facility charging information included in the SportScotland digest of Charges for Sports Facilities.

The proposed costs for indoor facilities would be based on the unit cost of the area of one badminton court and multiples thereafter, with a single charge being introduced for classroom/ meeting room use. The charges would be based on cost per hour for facility hire.

The proposed charging categories are as follows:

- Group 1 – Classroom/ Meeting Room
- Group 2 – Badminton Court-sized hall (e.g. small primary school hall/dining hall)

- Group 3 – 2 Badminton Courts-sized hall
- Group 4 – 3 Badminton Courts-sized hall
- Group 5 – 4 Badminton Courts- sized hall
- Group 6 – Multi Use Games Areas
- Group 7 -- All Weather Pitches
- Group 8 – Swimming Pools

The proposed baseline core charges for adult community activities for each of these categories, based on the current sports charges, are set out in Appendix 1.

Within these proposals, the charges for the smaller facilities, (i.e. Group 1 and Group 2), would reduce, whereas the charges for the larger facilities, which are a multiple of badminton courts, would increase, on the basis that groups are being charged for the specific space that they use.

### Consultation

Whilst some groups felt that the charging categories should also reflect the quality of the facility, it is hoped, that by applying the principle of focusing lets on the better quality facilities as set out in section 5 above this should be less of an issue.

Further consultation feedback queried whether there was potential for daily ceiling charges to be introduced for groups hiring facilities for a whole day or weekend for special events, (e.g. a pipe band competition). An option that the Council may wish to consider would be to support particular groups through grant aid.

## **7. Develop a charging policy which defines user categories and priorities.**

### Rationale

Within the current policy for educational lets, there are three main categories of user in the educational facilities:

- Internal
- External
- Corporate

Priority of access is currently given to the schools own extra curricular programme, followed by Youth organisations. Priority of access is not clearly defined in sports facilities and operates on a first come basis for quarterly lets, with existing customers being given priority. It is considered that these disparate policies may be preventing facilities being used to their optimum capacity, preventing individuals and community groups participating and potentially reducing income.

### Proposal

The proposal is that the Standard charges identified in Appendix 1 are applied Monday to Sunday in line with the following categories of users:

#### **Standard Rate**

- Adults – (i.e. groups comprised of adults aged over 16 years)

#### **Concession Rate (50% discount on Standard Rate)**

- Juniors (i.e. groups comprised of children and young people aged under 16 years)

- Students (i.e. groups comprised of people in full-time education)
- Senior Citizens (i.e., groups comprised of people aged over 60 years)
- Disability groups (i.e. groups comprised of those who are registered disabled) –
- Concession (i.e. groups comprised of those in receipt of unemployment or income related benefits) in line with the Access to Leisure policy

### **Development Rate (Additional 25% discount on the Standard or Concession Rate)**

- Sports clubs which have achieved the Council's enhanced level ClubCap (as referred to in section 8 of this report), other recognised Quality Assurance accreditation schemes
- Strategic partners (i.e. groups with whom the Council has a formal partnership, e.g. relevant National, Cultural, and Sporting bodies)
- Establishment of new organisations which are contributing to the delivery of Council strategies.

Eligibility for this rate would be reviewed on an annual basis, and would require to be endorsed by an appropriate senior officer and related to a relevant Council policy.

### **Community Commercial Rate (Charged at two times the Standard Rate)**

- Commercial Service Provider, i.e. groups or individuals which may be profit-making, or in the case of self-employed people, where an income is made, but where the service provided is deemed to be of significant community benefit and in line with the Council's objectives this rate rather than the full commercial rate is charged. An example would be a self-employed Martial Arts or Dance Instructor, whose activity contributes towards the delivery of 'Fit for the Future', though they generate income/ profit from their activity. The rationale for this proposal is that the City Council could be seen to be supporting the provision of community benefit by allowing access to facilities, without necessarily directly subsidising a profit-making business.

### **Commercial Rate (Charged at three times the Standard Rate)**

- Commercial (i.e. profit making organisations)

### **Free Lets**

- School approved extra-curricular activities for the direct benefit of the school children
- Non-profit-making Registered Childcare and Pre-School Provider (i.e. a non-profit-making organisation which is a recognised childcare provider under the City Council's Out-of-School Care Policy)
- Clinics and surgeries – for Aberdeen City Councillors, MPs and MSPs
- Business meetings for Representative Community Groups – (e.g. Community Councils and properly constituted Community Residents and Tenants Associations, Neighbourhood Network Groups, and Parent Councils / PTAs).
- Blood Transfusion Service

### **Non Standard Charges**

- Profit-making Childcare Provider (i.e. a profit-making organisation which is a recognised childcare provider under the City Council's Out-of-School Care Policy) – A contribution towards the establishment's energy costs, with the

- detail to be agreed in conjunction with Early Years Managers and the Aberdeen Early Years & Childcare Partnership
- Miscellaneous requests for lets – any requests that do not fall within the above charging categories should be referred to the relevant Head of Service for consideration of an appropriate level of charge

The majority of the above rates assume that all the participants, (though not necessarily the activity leaders, instructors or organisers), are comprised of the particular age group or category of user. However, recognising that organisations are not always homogeneous in their make up, it is proposed that, where more than 50% of the participants fall into one of the discounted/ concessionary categories, then they would be eligible for the reduced rate.

### **Non – Aberdeen City Users**

During the Workshop with Education, Culture and Sport Committee members in December 2009, a number of Councillors felt that there should be some form of differential charging for non – Aberdeen City residents and groups. This was discussed as part of the public consultation and the general opinion was that this would be very difficult to monitor and implement, as many groups operate on a Grampian wide basis or individuals such as the person making the application may live out with the City.

### Consultation

Feedback from those consulted mainly focused around the impact of the proposed charges on individual groups. Understandably, there were concerns that any significant increases in charges could potentially result in organisations no longer being viable; particular concerns were raised with reference to school football provision. Officers were very clear to stress that this was the last thing that the City Council wanted, but that charges needed to reflect the facilities being used.

In establishing a realistic way of dealing with this issue, it is felt that it will be important to consider the likely cost for individuals within a group, to assess whether these seem reasonable, and for City Council staff to work with groups to identify ways of making their activities more sustainable, (e.g. by sharing facilities with other similar groups, by increasing membership, or promoting the group).

It is however recognised that there may be a need to some provide some form of interim support, to enable groups to move to a position where they can afford increased charges. Consideration was given to introducing the charges on a phased basis over a two or three year period, however, officers felt that it would not target support to where it would be most needed. Grants could be made available to assist with hire charges where groups felt that the charge increases were detrimental to the sustainability of the activity. A benefit of this approach would allow the individual financial circumstances of groups, including the charges they levy to group members, and their capacity for fund-raising, to be considered. Applications could be considered by Committee on an annual basis, alongside the existing grants for sports and cultural organisations.

### **Access Priorities**

In considering the priority of access for schools and sports centres, it is proposed that this be considered in different time bands, as follows:

### **After School (3.30-6.00pm)**

Whereas in the past, the period immediately after the school day was preserved entirely for school use, it is proposed that general purpose areas within schools are included as part of the Lettings Scheme. This would be programmed, in consultation with Head Teachers, in order to encourage after-school activities, which augment the school curriculum, in line with the following priority order:

- Care Commission registered Out of School Care approved by City Council Education management, for the space/ facilities that they are registered for.
- School Extra-curricular activities.
- Active Schools activities.
- Independent groups and clubs, which provide positive activities for school-aged children.

### **Early Evenings (6.00-8.00pm) - in line with the following priority order:**

- School Extra-curricular activities.
- Independent groups and clubs, which provide activities for school-aged children.
- Voluntary/ community-based Adult groups and clubs.
- Commercial organisations.

### **Late Evenings (8.00-10.30pm) - in line with the following priority order:**

- Voluntary/ community-based Adult groups and clubs.
- Commercial organisations.

### **Weekends - in line with the following priority order:**

- School Extra-curricular activities.
- Active Schools activities.
- Independent groups and clubs, which provide activities for school-aged children.
- Voluntary/ community-based Adult groups and clubs.
- Commercial organisations.

### **School Holidays - in line with the following priority order:**

- City Council supported Holiday Play schemes and Out of School Care Clubs
- Active Schools activities.
- Independent groups and clubs, which provide activities for school-aged children.
- Voluntary/ community-based Adult groups and clubs.
- Commercial organisations.

In the event that there are one or more applicants for a particular let, which appear to be of a similar priority, it is proposed that the following criteria be used to help differentiate between them:

- Continuity of use (i.e. if they have been using the same venue and time slot for more than 3 years)
- Proximity to the establishment (i.e. if one of the groups can clearly demonstrate that a larger proportion of their participants live within the area closest to the venue)
- ClubCap Accreditation (i.e. priority would be given to a club which had achieved ClubCap Accreditation).

- Contribution to City Council policies (i.e. the extent to which the group or activity contributes to the delivery of City Council policies, including the Learning Strategy; Cultural Strategy; Sport and Physical Activity strategy; and Community Learning and Development national priorities).

#### Consultation

Feedback indicated concern that the new proposals would have a negative impact on groups with long term, consistent lets. Notwithstanding the priorities for access stated above, Officers suggest that recognition be given to groups which have had continuous lets for many years. The new Lettings procedures should try to avoid unnecessary disruption to longstanding lets, in order to allow for group development and facilitate forward planning.

### **8. Standardise quality assurance requirements of groups applying for facilities.**

#### Rationale

There is inequality between the two booking and letting policies with regards to conditions of hire and requirements of groups to demonstrate their eligibility as a user group. In sports facilities groups providing formal coaching activities or tuition are required to provide evidence of appropriate insurance and coaching qualifications. Whereas in educational establishments no such evidence is currently required, nor is there a requirement to prove eligibility of user category. Officers are currently working with sports clubs to support them to adopt ClubCap, a club accreditation scheme, as a means of acknowledging clubs, which operate in a structured way and in accordance with certain criteria. The accreditation programme is a quality assurance scheme which provides a developmental tool for sports clubs where they work towards certain levels of achievement to prove they are operating in a safe and well organised manner. The required standards can be achieved by large and small clubs, whatever their sport.

#### Proposal

The proposal is that all groups hiring facilities for structured coaching and tuition purposes will be required to demonstrate that appropriate documentation is in place. All groups will be required to demonstrate their eligibility for category of let.

#### Consultation

One group stated that it was not a legal requirement for voluntary groups to have coaching qualifications, Officers advised while this was true, that the Council was advocating good practice for sports groups in line with the views of SportScotland and the National Governing Bodies of Sport.

Some feedback indicated that this requirement may be a barrier to some groups. Groups were advised that support could be provided to achieve these requirements and that in order to allow groups to work towards this that a phased approach would be adopted with groups having 3 years to achieve this.

General feedback indicated that this was an excellent idea and that clubs should be encouraged to pursue club accreditation. Officers propose that enhanced accredited sports clubs would receive the additional incentive of the Development Rate, (i.e. a further 25% reduction in the Standard Rate).

A query was raised with regards to whether the Council could assist with insurance requirements. Officers advised that a similar situation had arisen in Aberdeenshire and that the Council or indeed Aberdeen Sports Council may be able to provide assistance.

## **9. Sign up to 2006 Accord for the Protection of Children in Scottish Sport by 2009.**

### Rationale

When letting its premises to a third party, the Council has no legal responsibility under the Protection of Children Scotland Act 2003, for vetting the third party's employees or volunteers. The organisation or individual taking the let is responsible for complying with the Act. Local authorities do not have a regulatory role with regards to groups/individuals letting their premises and should make this clear to those taking the let and to those using the service. However, there may be public perception that the City Council has some form of responsibility to ensure that organisations delivering activities on Council premises comply with the Act, even when those services are actually delivered by an independent organisation.

In order to address these public perceptions COSLA recommends that Councils should have conditions of let which seek assurances from the lessee that the requirements of the Act are being met together with other aspects of child protection and should therefore ensure that organisations are asked appropriate questions and given advice on sources of support.

The 2006 Accord aims to ensure that all stakeholders in Scottish Sport and organisations which are primarily concerned with the care, welfare and protection of young people, fulfil their responsibilities to protect children and young people from abuse, harm, exploitation in and through sport. A separate working group consisting of key partners across the city, supported by Children 1st is already progressing this area of work.

### Proposal

The proposal is that Aberdeen City Council and Sport Aberdeen sign up the 2006 Accord by April 2010

### Consultation

Public feedback indicated that this was an area of the review that all groups fully supported and they welcomed the approach to be adopted.

## **10. Carry out and implement an Access to Leisure Review.**

As this area of work refers in the main to individuals rather than groups or organisations, it is considered appropriate to progress this following the outcome of the other areas of the bookings and lettings review.

### **Additional Issues**

**Income to Learning Establishments** – A regular concern is that learning establishments receive no direct income from lets, to acknowledge the additional cost of heating, lighting, wear and tear on buildings, and cleaning and janitorial costs, resulting from the additional use on evenings and weekends. In order to



recognise this, partially compensate establishments for any increased intensity of use; it is proposed that 10% of the income is paid to the relevant learning establishment accounts.

**School Letting Applications** – At present, schools are not required to submit let applications for their own extra-curricular activities, which take place prior to 6.00pm on weekdays. Given that it is suggested that groups could potentially apply for lets before 6.00pm, (subject to requirements of schools), it is proposed that in future schools apply for use between 3.30 – 6.00pm. This would enable the provision of extra-curricular activities to be monitored, and included within usage figures which contribute to statutory performance indicators, and would also enable after-school programmes to be augmented by independently provided activities, and initiatives such as Active Schools. Whilst there is no longer a specific requirement for school management to authorise applications for lets, consultation would be required to ensure that lets would not conflict with school related activities (e.g. exams).

**Advance Payment** – A specific recommendation from the 2009 Internal Audit Report was that the introduction of advance payments for school lets should be explored. This was discussed as part of the two public consultation events, and the feedback varied dependant on the type of user group. Many groups would be happy to pay 'up front' for a school term, particularly if this guaranteed them some degree of continuity of lets; however a number of smaller groups, including some of the uniformed organisations, such as Brownies and Rainbow groups, indicated that this could cause them cash-flow difficulties. Given the internal audit recommendation it is therefore proposed that advanced payment for lets be introduced, giving due consideration to groups who may experience difficulties in this.

**Corporate Lettings Budget** —the Council's Corporate Lettings Budget is currently managed through Corporate Governance and is used to off-set the cost of identified free lets. The current expenditure amounts to approximately £140,000 per annum which equates to approximately one third of the overall annual income from Lettings. The eligibility for inclusion in this category has been amended over the years and a number of organisations now utilise this budget. Further work needs to be done to fully review this issue and it is therefore proposed that a further report is prepared for a future committee.

### Timescale

Should the recommendations be approved, facility users will receive information and be invited to make applications in April 2010 for use of facilities from August 2010 onwards. The operational details will be finalised before June with the new policy and procedures fully implemented in August 2010.

## **7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Sports Transformation Programme – Approved at Council 13 Feb 2008
- Digest of Charges for Sports Facilities; Scotland 2008/2009- A research study by SportScotland
- 'The Challenge of Charging' – Accounts Commission 1999
- 'Fit for the Future': A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Aberdeen City
- 'Vibrant Aberdeen': A Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen (Draft)
- Aberdeen City Council Learning Strategy (Draft)
- Out of School Care Policy 2008 Aberdeen Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- '2006 Accord for the Protection of Children in Scottish Sport' – Children 1<sup>st</sup> & SportScotland
- Henderson Loggie External Audit Report on School Lets (2006/07)

## Proposed Charges for Revised Bookings &amp; Lettings Policy – 18 February 2010

Category	Current Education Rate (per hour)	Proposed Standard Letting Rate (per hour) – based on current Sports Charges (Net of VAT)	Notes
Group 1 (Classrooms/ GP rooms)	£12.34	£8.83	
Group 2 (1 Badminton Court sized facility)	£15.61	£10.70	
Group 3 (2 Badminton Court sized facility)	£15.61	£21.40	
Group 4 (3 Badminton Court sized facility)	£18.87	£32.10	
Group 5 (4 Badminton Court sized facility)	£18.87	£42.80	
Group 6 (Multi Use Games Area)	£33.19	£30.00	Inc. floodlighting
Group 7 (Full Size All Weather Pitch)	£69.30	£60.00	Inc. floodlighting
Group 8 (Swimming Pools – based on 4 lanes)	£18.87	£41.40	£10 per hour reduction for unsupervised Pools

\*Note the above charges are based on Adult/ Standard Rates and will be discounted in line with the Charging Policy.