
Report To: Education and Communities Committee **Date: 22 January, 2013**

Report By: Head of Safer & Inclusive Communities **Report No: EDUCOM/16/13/JA**

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Subject: Letting Policy for Sport and Community Facilities.

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose changes in the current letting arrangements for sports and community facilities, bringing these into line with current practice in adjoining authorities and to address issues arising from current practice in Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council last reviewed its letting policy, specifically with regard to waivers to let, in January 2010. This report approved a range of waivers (from 100% to 75%) depending on the type of organisation involved. It included the extension of the provision of free lets for under 16 football teams to all team sports and uniformed organisations.
- 2.2 In April 2010, the booking office function was transferred to Inverclyde Leisure, together with the management of community facilities. Inverclyde Leisure undertook to modernise the booking system by introducing a computerised facility. Whilst this system is still in development, it has offered the opportunity to examine some management information not previously available regarding usage of facilities.
- 2.3 Also since April 2010, the Strategic Leisure Site Strategy, providing a range of new sports facilities has all but been completed, providing a range of sites in high demand from local sports clubs, particularly football clubs.
- 2.4 The current letting system and waivers policy do lead to frequent criticism of inconsistency of approach, pitches being booked but not used and pitches being booked and used free of charge by teams who do not qualify for waivers. On the basis of a sample of usage by 19 clubs (all but 2 of which are football clubs) it is estimated that the worth of free use for under 16s is £160,000 per annum.
- 2.5 It is proposed to introduce, following consultation, a registration policy for all teams and organisations wishing to use sporting and community facilities in Inverclyde. This is consistent with practice in neighbouring authorities and will enable officers to more effectively allocate facilities, monitor usage and standards and advise members on equitable means of supporting local organisations.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 a) That the Committee approve, in principle, the revision of the Council's letting policy to include registration as proposed.
b) That the Committee agree that a further report be brought to the next Committee, detailing the consultation response and recommending final amendments to the Council's letting policy.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's current letting policy allows a range of waivers to the letting charge to a wide range of organisations. Currently there is no requirement for organisations applying for these waivers to provide information about their activities, financial standing, constitution and aims, child protection policies or any other details which could reasonably be asked of organisations in receipt of public subsidy. A summary of organisations qualifying for waivers and the level of waiver is attached at appendix 1.
- 4.2 The lack of formal registration also inhibits communication with local organisations, in that it is not uncommon for various individuals to present themselves as representing a particular organisation when making bookings. A registration process would establish a more formal relationship with named individuals, thus aiding communication with that organisation regarding bookings, invoicing etc.
- 4.3 Formal registration, on an annual basis, also allows officers to collect information on participation numbers in organisations (this is particularly important where waivers are given to encourage the uptake of facilities and grow the number of participants in a particular age group), the quality of service, including coaching, provided and the participation of the organisation in governing body quality schemes, co-operation with other organisations, and participation in, for example, community sports hubs.
- 4.4 Formal registration also allows a more targeted approach to be taken to approving waivers, both generally and in relation to overall policy.
- 4.5 The universal waiver of charges for under 16 year olds participating in team sports in Inverclyde, whilst undeniably successful in alleviating local clubs of a financial burden, has had a number of unintended consequences which could threaten the affordability of the policy, but, more importantly, may be frustrating the aims of the Council in introducing the policy (to increase participation of individuals) and is limiting the availability of facilities to other organisations who do not qualify for this concession.
- 4.6 To illustrate some of the issues, a sample of bookings on Inverclyde Leisure's booking system indicates that an estimated £160,000 worth of bookings have been made by 19 sports club, 17 of which are football teams. The subsidy per club ranges from £2,028 per year to £29,336. In terms of participants, the subsidy per under 16 player per year ranges from £26.25 to £497. In terms of equalities, it is not surprising, given the predominance of football teams in this sample, that of the estimated total of £160,000 subsidy, only £9,311 goes to female participants.
- 4.7 The sample also indicates that teams, because they do not have to pay for the facility, are booking more than they can use (for example booking, in advance, an indoor facility at parallel times to outdoor facilities, presumably in case of adverse weather) cancelling the facility they do not use at short notice, thereby reducing access for other organisations.
- 4.8 Another result from the sampled data is that 3 clubs have only 16 players, a further 3 have 50 or fewer members, which supports the suggestion that free under 16 use has encouraged more teams to form, but not necessarily more participants. There is concern that clubs with only 16 members are not sustainable and only exist because of the free use policy. This may not be in the best interests of their members as bigger organisations are often better placed to participate in coaching development and quality schemes, not to mention have more capacity for such issues as child protection policies etc.
- 4.9 It is proposed that the local Sports Council, Uniformed Organisations, and CVS Inverclyde be consulted on this proposal and that a full report on the response and final recommendations be brought to the next Education and Communities Committee for consideration.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Financial. None at this time.

5.2 Legal. None

5.3 Personnel. None

5.4 Equalities. When delivering services to our customers, full cognisance is taken of equality and diversity processes and procedures.

5.5 Repopulation. High Quality, accessible leisure facilities play a key part in attracting and retaining residents. A transparent and supportive letting and waivers policy will support this aim.

Appendix 1

Category	Qualifying Organisation	Cttee date	Amended	Cttee Date
Commercial Let (2x normal charge)	Commercial Organisation operating for profit.	14/01/10		
Full Charge	Private Let, MPs, MSPs on parliamentary business	14/01/10		
25% Reduction	Charitable Orgs (registered?). School/ School Board outwith own school. Youth Organisations. Voluntary Organisations. Not for Profit Organisations. Unemployed Groups . <i>Use of community facilities by IC services outwith normal working hours (9-5 mon-fri).</i>	14/01/10	20k provided to allow CLD free access.	11/03/10
50% Reduction	<i>Uniformed Organisations. Under 16 Sports Teams that currently benefit from the free use of pitches.</i>	14/01/10	20k provided to allow free use of indoor lets to uniformed orgs on basis that they had a 25 % discount and annual income was £18750	11/03/10
75% Reduction	Disabled Groups Senior Citizen's Groups <i>Use of community facilities by IC services during normal working hours.(9-5 mon-fri)</i> <i>Use of Schools by CLD outwith normal school hours (after 6pm and 9am – 10pm at weekends)</i>	14/01/10	20k provided to allow CLD free access.	11/03/10
100% Reduction	School activities in their own school (up to # max hours to be determined). Parent councils etc events and fund raising in school (max hours to be determined). Community Councils for business meetings. 'Bona fide' TU activities. <i>Remove IC Services</i>	14/01/10	CLD free use re-introduced up to max of 20K top up to discounts.	11/03/10
U16 Pitches	Free use of Council pitches for sports teams		9k provided for free U16 use of Battery Park & Lady Octavia	11/03/10
U16 Other			20k provided to support free use of indoor facilities for U16 'who benefit from the free pitches strategy on basis of 18k annual income from such teams	11/03/10
Other			36k provided to remove peak charges and level charges between IL and IC synthetic pitch charges – one standard	11/03/10

			adult hourly rate of £54.50 (2010)	
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