
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	5 May 2015
Report By:	Corporate Director – Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/48/15/MM
Contact Officer:	Martin McNab	Contact No:	4246
Subject:	Waivers Update Report		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval for amendments to the sports waiver scheme.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Committee approved a new waivers scheme in March 2014. The first year's operation of the scheme has revealed significant issues around the ability of some clubs to operate under the scheme. These are detailed in 5.1.
- 2.2 Problems were also encountered with the availability of good management information to allow the scheme to be administered effectively.
- 2.3 In order to support clubs in moving to a more sustainable future model proposals for the amendment of the scheme are detailed in section 7 of this report. The proposals have been consulted on and agreed by the Inverclyde Sports Framework Implementation Group.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Committee approves the proposals for the treatment of sports waivers for the current season detailed in 7.1.
- 3.2 That the Committee approves the proposals for amendments to the sports waiver scheme detailed in 7.3.

Patricia Cassidy
Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Members will recall that a new policy for access to waivers by U/19 teams was approved by the Committee in 2014. The new system was intended to address the following issues which had been identified in the previous system of unrestricted free access:

- A lack of incentive for clubs to organise effectively to make best use of facilities
- Underuse of pitches
- Facilities being left empty by clubs which had no incentive to cancel bookings
- Failure of clubs to abide by conditions of let
- Significant cost to the Council of lets in Inverclyde Leisure run facilities, at the time at Lady Octavia and Battery Park but with the likelihood of that extending to all of the outdoor estate except the schools
- The sole gatekeeper to access to the scheme was the Inverclyde Leisure booking office

4.2 The system implemented for 2014-15 gave youth football clubs an allocation of hours for training based upon numbers of registered players. Clubs were to get all competitive matches drawn in Inverclyde for free plus two friendlies. In order not to disadvantage clubs with successful cup runs actual matchplay would be used rather than a generic allowance. It was expected at the time of the report that Inverclyde Leisure would have their new booking system in place by the start of the season and that this was to require payment in advance. The decision was taken to pay waivers one month in arrears. This would allow assessment of actual matchplay in the month and therefore clubs would receive exactly what they were due under the scheme.

4.3 The primary recipients of support under the waivers scheme were youth football clubs therefore effort was put into devising a fair allowance scheme for them. Other sports would be assessed on an ongoing basis. It was recognised that this might result in other sports not having to adhere to quite such strict allocation rules as football but this was deemed necessary to support a diversity of sports and to ensure equality of access in terms of female participation.

5.0 ISSUES WITH THE SCHEME IN 2014-15

5.1 Major issues were encountered with the implementation of the scheme in 2014/15. Some of these were administrative and some to do with the individual clubs. The major administrative issues were as follows:

- (i) The proposed move by Inverclyde Leisure to a new booking system, initially expected in July 2014 did not actually happen fully until early 2015. Management information from the old system had been recognised as an issue early on in the process and this proved to be the case. As a result of this the assessment of actual hours booked and therefore what clubs were due became a significant problem.
- (ii) A related issue was the need to establish that clubs had paid for a month's use prior to reimbursement being authorised.
- (iii) There were also issues in ascertaining exactly which matches qualified for free use under the scheme. Reliable up to date information on league and cup draws was very hard to establish.

All of these issues led to significant delays in processing payments which was not in the interest of the clubs, the Council or Inverclyde Leisure.

5.2 The other major issues related to the organisation and capacity of the clubs themselves. It became clear in the course of the season that the policy of free access to pitches had a number of unintended consequences for clubs and the impact largely depended on whether clubs had a strong committee structure. Clubs largely fell into three categories in relation to their ability to operate under the new rules:

- (i) Clubs which would probably never have existed but for the policy of free access to pitches. Under the old system there was no disincentive to individuals setting up a team unconnected to existing clubs or breaking away from an existing club. These clubs had never had to raise money for pitches as a result of which they were unable to pay for lets even one month in advance. This group of clubs are currently unsustainable and may not be able to make the transition to a sustainable club.
- (ii) Clubs which had at one stage been well organised but which had deteriorated under the free access arrangements. Individual team coaches took over bookings and club committees fell away. When the requirement to pay in advance was introduced some clubs made headway in organising lets better but were unable to raise funds to pay for lets. These clubs are currently unsustainable but may be able to make the transition to sustainable clubs with suitable support.
- (iii) Clubs which kept their committee structure intact and which continued to raise funds. These clubs operated successfully under the new system. Funds raised were spent on things other than pitch hire e.g. strips, team trips etc. It is notable that other sports which may not have had access to free pitches for so long did not have any problems with the new system beyond those caused by the administrative issues noted above.

5.3 As a result of the problems noted above there are some key issues to address for the season 2014/15 even before we look at proposals for a revised scheme for 2015/16.

- How to reconcile any outstanding “debt” on the system for clubs which have been unable to cope and therefore have no payments on the system.
- When dealing with the above how to ensure that those clubs which have operated the system and may be out of pocket as a result are dealt with equitably.

6.0 FUTURE ISSUES

6.1 The provision of free pitch hire at the level at the level it has been available up till now cannot be guaranteed in future. It is therefore essential to move those clubs which would be vulnerable to this, into a position where they are sustainable going forward. This will meet one of the key priorities of the Inverclyde Sports Framework which is “sustainable clubs”. This may not be possible for all, in particular the first category in 2.2 above. If clubs are unable to reform there is ample provision elsewhere and there may be some which are allowed to cease to exist.

6.2 As of 1 April 2015 the full management of external pitches outwith the school estates transferred to Inverclyde Leisure. IL is likely to be more robust with clubs which do not pay and indeed it is already proposing removing access to pitches by clubs owing money. A transitional arrangement may be agreed for April and May this year but clubs must be prepared for this in the new season.

7.0 PROPOSALS

7.1 For season 2014/15 the following is proposed:

- Outstanding debt by clubs eligible for support under the system will be written off.
- Clubs which have paid more than they have been reimbursed will have the balance reimbursed for this season only. This is purely to ensure that these clubs are not disadvantaged in comparison to those less well organised and are not penalised for following the new rules.
- Transitional arrangements will be implemented to ensure that this continues to May to cover the end of the 2014/15 season.

7.2 Initial work has been started by the Community Sports Hub Officer in developing sustainable club workshops with CVS Inverclyde. Clubs in the first two categories in 5.2 above will be invited to meetings and offered support in becoming sustainable. If they do not participate

they may be removed from the waivers system.

- 7.3 The club waivers system will be continued under the current rules for season 2015/16 as regards club allocations with the following amendments:
- (i) Clubs will be given a fixed allocation for matchplay for each team at the start of a season. This will cover all home league games. Payment for home drawn cup games will be made in arrears. Clubs will be required to provide evidence of additional games played on a monthly basis including evidence that the game was drawn at home. These games will then be covered with an additional payment.
 - (ii) Payment to clubs will be phased over a 10 month period from August to May. Payment will be made mid-month to allow clubs to have funds to pay the monthly invoice due at the end of the month. The payment for the following month will not be released if the invoice from IL has not been settled. IL will then follow their own procedures to remove the right of access to pitches for clubs which have not settled their debts.
 - (iii) It will be the responsibility of individual clubs to ensure that they can cover any fluctuations in the value of bookings on a month to month basis.
 - (iv) Individual agreements will be made with other sports on the access they require prior to the start of the season and payment will also be phased over 10 months.
- 7.4 In consultation the option to give clubs an allowance of hours to draw down was considered but it was felt that clubs needed to move to a model where they were better able to manage their own finances.
- 7.5 The above changes should reduce the administrative burden, potentially depoliticise the issue and promote more sustainable clubs as they will have to take greater responsibility for their own affairs.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 8.1 Any costs arising from the changes to the waivers scheme will be contained in existing budgets. The situation will be kept under tight scrutiny however.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

Legal

8.2 There are no legal implications.

Human Resources

8.3 There are no implications for human resources.

Equalities

8.4 The proposed changes to the scheme should help promote a more gender positive balance in the support the Council gives to sport.

Repopulation

8.5 A vibrant and flourishing sporting community should have a positive effect on the image of the area.

9.0 CONSULTATIONS

9.1 In preparing this report the following have been consulted:

Legal and Property Services

Finance

The Sports Framework Implementation Group

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Policy for the Granting of Waivers to Letting Charges for Sports and Community Facilities – Education & Communities Committee March 2014

Update on Policy on Waivers to Let – Football – Education & Communities Committee May 2014