

Sport & Wellbeing Pricing Policy (draft)	14th June 2016
To: Leisure & Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, healthy and engaged communities
Outcome	Access to Council recreational facilities and the development and promotion of stable and cohesive communities across the Borough.
Lead Officer	Wendy McCullough – Head of Sport & Wellbeing
Cost: (If applicable)	n/a

The purpose of this report is to present a draft Pricing Policy for Sport and Wellbeing for Members consideration prior to EQI screening.

Background

Existing price tariffs across the Sport & Wellbeing (SWB) department have evolved over many years from the legacy Councils that constitute the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council. Whilst there are similarities in some charges there are also significant variations. Equally the associated policies differ in a number of factors.

A working group carried out a review of the legacy positions in the Leisure Centres, Recreation Centres and Outdoor facilities. This review provided an opportunity to strategically align new charges to Councils Vision, Mission and Strategic themes. This review therefore had four objectives:

1. Value for Money (VFM): To reduce the subsidy of facilities by seeking to maximise income on an annual basis.
2. Access: To ensure charges for all facilities within SWB are as inclusive as possible taking into account demographics and the social need of our communities.
3. Consistency: to ensure a consistent approach to pricing and charges across all leisure & sports facilities within the CC&G Council.
4. Comparability: Ensure prices are comparable with competitors within the CC&G Council and other Councils.

The conclusions drawn by the working group in relation to the current situation were;

- Fees differ across the legacy areas and raise issues of inequality and a lack of fairness for the user.
- Fees are complex and confusing for the customer.
- Little evidence of purpose.
- Not targeted to drive throughput, income or the wider social impact.
- Councils traditionally raised prices each year, normally from 1st April, at around the rate of inflation regardless of any benchmarks and regardless of any trends in customer usage.

The agreed desirable outcome of the review by the working group was that the future should provide clear, simple charges and a unifying pricing policy that were;

- Traceable and aligned with Corporate & Service objectives.
- Grounded in fact and evidence.
- Transparent, Competitive & Inclusive.

Current position

A Fees & Charges workshop was held with Members during which the main findings of the review were presented. Whilst it was evident that the desired outcomes were yet to be achieved, a number of key issues emerged that members felt were key to the final pricing policy and the associated fees and charges;

Throughput for activities:

- Are activities operating at near to, or even, full capacity?
- How price sensitive might these activities be to an increase or decrease in charges and what evidence exists to support that assumption?
- What is the cost-neutral price for activities when new charges are applied?

Concessions & eligibility:

- What is the likely impact on the existing income of offering concessions to these categories?

Introduction of Access to Leisure scheme:

- What is the likely uptake of this scheme across the Borough?
- What might be the impact of this on existing incomes streams?
- What state benefits are most appropriate and will have the most significant benefit to the likely user of this scheme?

Comparability:

- What are other councils charging for the same activities, given that anecdotal evidence suggests ratepayers are travelling outside the borough to take part in sporting activities that they could avail of in CC&G. Is this because charges here are too high?

Next steps

Mindful of comments and suggestions during the workshop, Officers are presenting the draft Pricing Policy for approval by Committee in June (Annex A).

During the summer recess the draft policy will be screened for equality impact and officers will compile a further report for August committee which provides additional commentary and statistics for the issues identified during the Members' workshop.

Also included in the August report for Members approval will be proposals for charges that may be applied to activities taking place in Leisure Centres, Recreation Centres and Outdoor facilities (pitches).

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the draft Pricing Policy for Sport & Wellbeing which is subject to EQI screening. Any adjustments to the policy as a consequence of the screening will be brought back to Committee for consideration and final approval in August along with recommendations for charges.

(If August report is adopted by Council the intention would be to implement the charges in September 2016).

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Sport & Wellbeing Pricing Policy



1. The policy is set within the context of Council's Corporate Plan and the Sport & Wellbeing Strategic objects;

- Ensure the facilities and services on offer meet the needs of the community and visitors to the area for the betterment of their health and wellbeing and provides the opportunity to increase existing participation levels.
- Provide accessible and quality facilities and services for residents and visitors to the area which operate in an efficient and effective manner.
- Develop and improve partnerships designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services.

2. The principles of this policy are that an effective pricing policy should:

- Contribute to the strategic aims of increasing participation in sport and physical activity: widening access: and improving health and wellbeing.
- Minimise the barriers to participation.
- Be simple and easy for users to understand.
- Effectively target subsidy primarily based on the individual's ability to pay and not a general blanket subsidy across a geographical area.
- Be, at worst, revenue neutral when compared to the current revenue position of the Sport & Wellbeing section.

3. Scope of pricing policy:

The policy covers charges as they apply in the Leisure Centres, Recreation Centres and Outdoor facilities across the Borough of Causeway Coast & Glens.

4. Rates:

The pricing policy offers customers a choice of options ranging from "pay and play", concession cards and membership packages including direct debit schemes.

Activity rates are based on an Adult charge with a concessionary rate agreed by Council annually which is applicable to the following groups;

- Juvenile – under the age of 18years*
- Senior Citizen – 65+
- Student – in full-time education (tertiary level) / holding a full-time student card
- Economically disadvantaged

ANNEX A

* Dependent on the activity and associated costs, Council may not charge for children under the age of 5 years – activities to be advertised as appropriate in each facility.

Concession rates will be applicable only to single ticket activities. Where an activity or course has additional operational costs associated with the service the Head of Sport & Wellbeing retains the discretion to implement a discount for any or all of the above groups which is proportional to the delivery costs.

5. Economically disadvantaged:

Individuals may apply for an Access to Leisure / ATL card (proof of eligibility must be provided on application) which will provide entitlement to a concessionary rate where the Access to Leisure Scheme is operating in a Council facility.

Eligibility will be based on an individual being in receipt of designated state benefits. These benefits will be agreed and updated by Council annually in line with guidance from relevant government organisations (i.e. DHSS).

6. Membership packages:

Membership packages are designed to enable those who can afford to, and who want to, make the financial commitment to pay on a monthly basis for a minimum period of time. In recognition of this financial commitment to the facility and the life-long benefit of an active lifestyle, customers can take advantage of a discount on the daily ticket price.

The types of packages on offer are based on the services available in a facility, either as an individual activity or multiple activity schemes and any current public / private partnership agreement currently in operation.

7. Block Bookings Group / Club Pricing:

Block booking pricing and procedures apply where a club, society and/or organisation "block" books a facility at one of the Council's main Leisure Centres, Recreation Centres or Outdoor facilities. Block bookings are where a booking is made, in advance, for a number or series of sessions and/or dates. In addition, specific regulations and conditions of hire of facilities apply to contract bookings including VAT exemption rules.

NOTE: Exemption from V.A.T for Block Bookings

A block booking will only be exempt from V.A.T where it meets all of the following conditions:

- a) The series consists of 10 or more sessions.
- b) Each session is for the same sport or activity.
- c) Each session is in the same place (although a different pitch, court or lane; or different number of pitches, courts or lanes is acceptable).
- d) The interval between each session is at least 1 day but not more than 14 days. (The duration of the sessions may be varied; however there is no exception for intervals greater than 14 days through the closure of the facility for any reason)
- e) The series is to be paid as a whole and there is written evidence to the fact.

ANNEX A

- f) This must include evidence that payment is to be made in full whether or not the right to use the facility for any specific session is actually exercised.
- g) Provision for a refund given by the provider in the event of the unforeseen non-availability of their facility would not affect this condition.
- h) The facilities are let out to a school, club, association or organisation representing affiliated clubs or constituent associations, such as a local league.
- i) The person to whom the facilities are let has exclusive use of them during the sessions.

NOTE: when booking a facility an individual or group are not at liberty to sub-let or assign any part to a third party.

8. Council Courses:

Course prices are determined and influenced by some or all of the following factors and priced accordingly:

- Costs of facility being used to provide that course;
- Minimum attendance numbers to ensure the course is feasible to run;
- Staffing costs to accommodate the specific child to coach ratios for that course;
- Any equipment, certificates and/or medals required;
- Additional fees, where an external company is used to provide a course;
- Pricing for courses may also differ between the centres due to demand and availability of facilities within the centre plus size and arrangement of facilities at the centre

9. Cancellations & Refunds

Council reserves the right to cancel courses and bookings.

If paid in advance, Council will provide a refund to customers where the Council has cancelled a course or booking session. If only part of the course / booking is cancelled, the refund will be pro-rata. The customer is not entitled to a refund of course or booking fees for cancellations made by them prior to the course starting and/or sessions they have failed to attend.

Courses are run with minimum levels of attendances and are therefore subject to demand.

10. Charitable discounts

In respect of those premises for which concessionary hire is applicable, applications for charitable discount will be required to demonstrate to what extent their event or activity contributes to corporate priorities in order to avail of any discount.

The maximum level of concession is as agreed by the Council in relation to block bookings.

ANNEX A

The only exception to the implementation of policy on concessionary hire of premises is in respect of events in support of the current Mayor's Charity approved by the Head of Sport & Wellbeing, and this exception will be approved only on the basis that all costs incurred by the service, including loss of income, are reimbursed to the service by the applicant.

11. Discretionary pricing

Flexibility, with strict approval processes by the Head of Sport & Wellbeing, may be introduced to allow scope for sales promotions, official Council events etc. As per point no.10 discretionary pricing must take account of costs incurred and potential impact on income.

12. Commercial charges

A commercial rate will be applied when subsidised facilities are hired to commercial organisations. The rate will be at above the standard charge for an activity which is commensurate with the level of commerciality the activity entails;

- a) Local individual enterprise – standard charge x 1.5
- b) Regional enterprise – standard charge x 2
- c) National / International – standard charge x 3

13. Implementation

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with the Director of Leisure & Development.

14. Guidelines and Forms

A schedule of charges, concession summary, site specific pricing guides, conditions of hire, publicity and information are all relevant in the implementation of the policy and will be made available on request and where appropriate displayed in each facility.

15. Communication Strategy

Information on pricing will be available in all leisure and sports facilities and their associated web and social media sites. This policy will be available on request from the Head of Service and Senior Managers in Sport & Wellbeing and will also be accessible through the council's website.

Responsibility for the communication of this policy to staff lies with the service managers.

This Pricing Policy is subject to review annually in line with performance audits and annual reports presented to Council by the Head of Sport & Wellbeing. The policy is also subject to Equality Impact screening to ensure no significant detriment is suffered by any individual or group in the implementation of the content.