

MOTION 3 REFERRED FROM FULL COUNCIL ON 30 JULY 2024

Head of Service:	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
Report Author	Samantha Whitehead
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Motion 3 to Full Council on the 30 July 2024

Summary

The report provides a basis for debate of the motion submitted to the meeting of Full Council on 30 July 2024 in relation to the Pay-to-Play Tennis Scheme and tennis charges.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the motion referred to this Committee by Full Council and take no further action after considering the content of this report.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To enable the Committee to debate the motion and make a decision.

2 Background

- 2.1 A Motion was submitted to Full Council at its meeting on 30 July 2024, proposed by Cllr Kieran Persand and seconded by Cllr Bernie Muir, as attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 This item was referred to the Environment Committee as the relevant policy committee to debate the motion.

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- 2.3 In summary the motion asks the Committee to revisit the current court fees and look to lower them, allow free access to people 18 and under, and provide a further discounted rate to those in receipt of low-income benefits.

3 Current Charges

- 3.1 The household membership (up to five people in each household) of £40 per annum allows for unlimited play on all the courts in the Borough. Those on low incomes and receipt of benefits can apply for a discounted household membership of £20 per annum. Alternatively, there is the option to pay £6 for an ad-hoc booking if players do not want to commit to an annual membership subscription.

- 3.2 The table below helps illustrate the cost per session:

Charging scenarios		
Calculations based on booking once a week for 26 weeks of the year		
No of tennis players in household	Standard £40.00 per annum	Discounted £20.00 per annum
1	£1.54	£0.77
2	£0.77	£0.38
3	£0.51	£0.26
4	£0.38	£0.19
5	£0.31	£0.15

- 3.3 During the school summer holidays, the Environment Committee took the decision to offer free bookable tennis sessions to all residents. Free tennis courts could be booked from Tuesday 23 July to Monday 26 August 2024, between 8am and 12pm. During the course of the summer, 173 residents took up this offer.
- 3.4 Additionally, officers have been working closely with Tennis Coaching Providers over the past months to implement tennis coaching in Court Recreation Ground, Alexander Recreation Ground and Auriol Park. A condition of the Coaching Scheme requires coaches to pledge to provide free Activator Led tennis sessions in the Parks on Saturday mornings.
- 3.5 Until these Activator Led sessions are up and running in all tennis courts across the Borough, the Council is offering two free, bookable sessions between 9-10am and 10-11am each Saturday to enable those of all ages, experience, and socio-economic background to participate.

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4 Impact of Lowering Charges

- 4.1 At the meeting of the Environment Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2023, members resolved to introduce a charging strategy for tennis in the Borough.
- 4.2 The Council received a grant to install the gates which is covered by a contract with the LTA. The council has committed to maintaining and operating the gate system for 5 years. The income therefore needs to cover the maintenance costs. Should we be in breach of the contract the LTA would request their full grant back.
- 4.3 The charges are in line with other Councils who have successfully implemented Pay-to-Play tennis and were set following advice from the Lawn Tennis Association.
- 4.4 The Environment Committee now have an income target of £17,500 for 24/25 and as of 30 August 2024, £12,500 has been achieved. Leaving £5,000 to be recovered by the end of the financial year.
- 4.5 A reduction in charges will jeopardise this income and any shortfall will need to be found by reducing expenditure in other Environment Committee areas.

5 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 5.1 Equality Impact Assessment
 - 5.1.1 By offering free, bookable sessions at the weekends and discounted Pay to Play Annual Membership Passes, the Council is encouraging members of the community, who may be facing financial difficulty, the opportunity to play tennis in the Borough.
- 5.2 Crime & Disorder
 - 5.2.1 Not applicable
- 5.3 Safeguarding
 - 5.3.1 Not applicable
- 5.4 Dependencies
 - 5.4.1 Not applicable
- 5.5 Other
- 5.6 The risk of upholding the motion is outlined in the body of the report.

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6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The motion, if carried, has the potential to significantly reduce tennis income. Without additional income streams, the Council will struggle to maintain and reinvest in sporting facilities. The aim of generating income is to build up a sinking fund that, over time, creates a reserve to pay for future maintenance and refurbishment. There is also a risk that the Committee will not raise sufficient funds to pay for the annual subscription of £2,380 that covers the yearly servicing and general maintenance of the gates and use of the Clubspark software.
- 6.2 If Members choose to revoke or amend the decisions taken at the Environment Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2023 and agree to lower charges, this will have an impact on the Committee's 2024/25 budget and the income will need to be found from another source within the Environment Committee's budget.
- 6.3 Reducing or waiving the fees to users of the tennis courts could lead to similar requests from other users of Council sports facilities. If the Council cannot generate sufficient income to fund non-statutory sports provision, other options would need to be considered such as closing the facilities or stopping other non-statutory services.
- 6.4 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are included in the body of the report.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 None.
- 7.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arise from the content of this report.

8 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 8.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:
- 8.2 **Service Plans:**
- 8.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**
- 8.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Not applicable
- 8.5 **Partnerships:** None
- 8.6 **Background papers**
- 8.6.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:
- Other papers:**
- Previous reports:**

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- Tennis in the Borough – 13 June 2023