

ANNUAL REVIEW OF TENNIS IN THE BOROUGH

Head of Service: Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
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Wards affected: (All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:
Appendices (attached):

Summary

To review the progress of the Pay to Play Tennis Scheme and to seek permission to offer free Sunday morning sessions at Gibraltar and Poole Road Recreation Grounds and offer free morning tennis sessions during the school summer holidays in 2025.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the progress of the Pay to Play Tennis Scheme**
- (2) Approve the proposal to offer additional free Sunday morning tennis sessions at Gibraltar and Poole Road Recreation Grounds as from 1 April 2025 as set out in paragraph 6.2.**
- (3) Approve the proposal to offer free morning tennis sessions on all tennis courts in the borough from 22 July 2025 to 29 August 2025.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Pay-to-Play tennis scheme was introduced in April 2024 and has been well received, with an increasing number of residents signing up for annual membership or booking courts on an ad-hoc basis. The free morning tennis sessions offered during last year's school summer holidays were also considered a success, and the proposal is to repeat the initiative this year. The proposal to introduce free Sunday morning tennis sessions at Gibraltar and Poole Road Recreation Grounds will encourage use of these courts and compensate for the lack of tennis coaching providers at these locations.

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2 Background

- 2.1 At the Environment Committee Meeting on 13 June 2023, members took the decision to introduce Pay to Play Tennis in the borough through the adoption of a Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) grant funded gate access system and the web based booking platform called Clubspark.
- 2.2 The scheme was launched in April 2024, and residents encouraged to participate in the scheme through direct marketing at the tennis courts and online. Residents either purchase a household membership for up to five people at a cost of £40 per year (£20 per year for low-income households), allowing unlimited play, or book courts on an ad-hoc basis at a rate of £6 per hour.
- 2.3 Tennis coaches were appointed at Court Recreation Ground, Alexandra Park and Auriol Park. Coaches pay an annual package price which allows them to book the courts for up to 10 hours per week. Coaches can buy multiple 10 hour packages up to a maximum of 30 hours per week. Currently the Coach at Court Rec buys 30 hours a week, Alexandra Rec, 20 hours and Auriol Park 10 hours a week. As part of the Coaching agreement, all tennis coaching providers take part in the Barclays Free Park Tennis Initiative, offering at least one hour of free, supervised, community tennis activity at their designated location each weekend.

3 Membership and Bookings

- 3.1 The following table shows the number of memberships and ad-hoc bookings sold each month between April 2024 and February 2025.

	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	Total
Ad-hoc booking	87	130	194	190	236	145	91	46	41	31	36	1227
Discounted												
Membership @												
£20 per annum	8	2			1	2	1					14
Membership @												
£40 per annum	54	43	35	30	25	8	8	5	8	1	4	221
Grand Total	149	175	229	220	262	155	100	51	49	32	40	1462

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- 3.2 The second table shows the usage at each site between April 2024 and February 2025. Please note this includes bookings made under the free weekend tennis scheme and 173 bookings made between July – August 2024 which were booked as part of the free summer tennis initiative:

	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Total
Auriol Park total	44	65	121	129	140	82	77	69	63	43	56	889
Member bookings	35	50	95	97	111	61	60	67	60	39	53	728
Ad-Hoc	9	15	26	32	29	21	17	2	3	4	3	161
Court Rec total	96	145	246	245	210	205	196	179	133	152	142	1949
Member bookings	70	101	169	189	142	153	159	141	110	140	127	1501
Ad-Hoc	26	44	77	56	68	52	37	38	23	12	15	448
Gibraltar Rec total	5	14	19	31	58	22	9	7	2	19	9	195
Member bookings	4	8	9	23	44	15	6	7	2	17	6	141
Ad-Hoc	1	6	10	8	14	7	3			2	3	54
Poole Road total	29	49	30	70	91	52	34	25	26	26	19	451
Member bookings	18	39	21	54	69	37	32	25	22	20	16	353
Ad-Hoc	11	10	9	16	22	15	2		4	6	3	98
Alexandra Rec total	102	162	230	248	337	242	173	135	111	105	102	1947
Member bookings	68	119	161	174	242	193	147	128	100	99	94	1525
Ad-Hoc	34	43	69	74	95	49	26	7	11	6	8	422
Grand Total	276	435	646	723	836	603	489	415	335	345	328	5431

- 3.3 The third table shows the income raised from membership and ad-hoc bookings less online payment fees of £848.09 for period of April 24 – February 25.

Payment Type	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	Total
Ad-hoc booking	487	735	1148	1079	1381	828	519	220	225	157	209	6987
Discounted Membership @ £20 per annum	153	38			19	38	19					268
Membership @ £40 per annum	2084	1659	1350	1158	965	309	309	193	308	39	154	8526
Grand Total	2724	2432	2498	2237	2364	1175	847	413	533	196	363	15782

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- 3.4 In addition to the £15,782 raised from membership and ad-hoc bookings, we have generated £3,937 coaching income to date, giving a total income of £19,719. Allowing for membership subscriptions and ad-hoc bookings during March 2025 we are predicting a final outturn of around c£20,000 at the end of this financial year against a income budget of £17,500.

4 Maintenance of the Tennis Courts

- 4.1 During the past year, we have also carried out the following maintenance of the tennis courts:

- Jet washing – all sites
- Moss Treatment – all sites
- Leaf blowing/sweeping – all sites
- Improved signs – all sites
- Wind breakers at Court Rec, Gibraltar Rec and Poole Road
- New benches at Poole Road and Auriol Park

- 4.2 Planned maintenance for 25/26 includes:

- Auriol – spring moss treatment and jet wash
- Poole Road – spring moss treatment and jet wash
- Alex Rec – spring moss treatment, jet wash and laser line marking
- Gib Rec – spring moss treatment and jet wash
- Alex Rec – spring moss treatment, jet wash and laser line marking

5 Marketing

- 5.1 The team are currently working on new marketing assets to ensure that we are ready for the new season, marketing will encourage people to take up new memberships, renew existing memberships and sign up to Clubspark to book the free morning sessions during the school summer holidays. It is hoped that introducing more people to the Clubspark platform via the offer of free summer sessions will convert some of these residents into new members.
- 5.2 Other marketing initiatives planned for the year include promoting the Activator Led Sessions, Coaching Open Days and supporting Barclays Big Tennis Weekends in collaboration with tennis coaches.

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6 Free Tennis Sessions

- 6.1 We currently offer two hours of free, bookable, tennis sessions every weekend throughout the year. At Alexandra, Auriol and Court one of these sessions is provided by the Tennis Coaches under the LTA/Barclays Free Park Tennis Scheme.

	Saturday	Sunday
Alexandra Park	9am-10am 10am-11am - Activator Led	
Auriol Park	9am-10am 10am-11am - Activator Led	
Court Rec	10am-11am	10am-11am - Activator Led
Gibraltar Rec	9am-11am	
Poole Road	9am-11am	

- 6.2 In the absence of coaching providers at Gibraltar Recreation and Poole Road and to encourage usage at these locations, it is proposed to add additional free sessions between 9am-11am on Sundays at Gibraltar and Poole Road Recreation Grounds.

7 Free Summer Tennis

- 7.1 Last year, 173 bookings were made under the free morning tennis scheme, which ran during the school summer holiday period.
- 7.2 Due to the popularity of the initiative, it is proposed that members agree to offer a similar scheme in 2025.
- 7.3 The terms of this year's scheme will offer free morning tennis sessions (up to 12 noon) from 22 July 2025 to 29 August 2025, covering the school holiday period.
- 7.4 To take advantage of the offer, individuals must first register with Clubspark and then use the platform to book their free sessions. This serves as an effective way to introduce potential customers to the web-based application, with the aim of encouraging them to become members in the future. It operates similarly to a 'free trial' but without any obligation to purchase a full membership.

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- 7.5 Last year, residents who already had a membership or signed up during the free period were automatically given an extra month for free as compensation. However, this year, we propose informing new and renewing members about the free summer tennis scheme before they purchase a membership or renew, allowing them to make an informed decision. We do not propose offering an additional free month to existing members this year.

8 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

8.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.1.1 Tennis in the borough is accessible to people of all ages, abilities, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. To support low-income households, a 50% discount is available on the standard household membership, alongside free tennis sessions offered throughout the year.

8.2 Crime & Disorder

- 8.2.1 None for the purpose of this report

8.3 Safeguarding

- 8.3.1 All tennis coaching sessions are delivered by fully qualified coaches and volunteer activators, all of whom have undergone DBS checks.

8.4 Dependencies

- 8.4.1 The ongoing success of the Pay to Play Tennis Scheme in the borough will be dependent on a sustained marketing campaign, reinvestment in the tennis facilities using the ringfenced income generated by the scheme, and a robust relationship with tennis coaching providers.

8.5 Other

- 8.5.1 None

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9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The income generated by the scheme is set out in paragraph 3.3 and 3.4 of this report. As agreed by the Environment Committee on 13 June 2023, all income raised will be used to pay the annual Clubspark administration fee and to fund the ongoing maintenance and refurbishment of the tennis courts.
- 9.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are within the body of the report.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have entered into a grant funding agreement with LTA which means that we are legally obligated to provide Pay to Play Tennis facilities in the Borough for the remainder of the 5 year term.
- 10.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report

11 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 11.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:
- Safe and Well
 - Smart and Connected
 - Effective Council
- 11.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 11.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None
- 11.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Pay to Play Tennis ensures the ongoing sustainability of Park Tennis in the borough.
- 11.5 **Partnerships:** The Lawn Tennis Association and Tennis Coaching Providers.

12 Background papers

- 12.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Tennis in the Borough Report – 13 June 2023

Other papers:

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- None