

FREE SUMMER TENNIS

Head of Service:	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
Report Author	Samantha Whitehead
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix One – Tennis Court Utilisation

Summary

To review the continued success of the Pay-to-Play Tennis Scheme, including participation levels, income generation and investment in court maintenance, and to seek approval for the continuation of free morning tennis sessions during 2026 school summer holidays.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the progress of the Pay to Play Tennis Scheme**
- (2) Approve the proposal to offer free morning tennis sessions on all tennis courts in the borough from 22 July 2026 to 31 August 2026.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Pay-to-Play tennis scheme was introduced in April 2024 and has continued to demonstrate strong growth, with memberships increasing from 268 in 2024/25 to 316 in 2025/26 and ad-hoc bookings increasing from 1404 to 1868 over the same period.
- 1.2 The free morning tennis sessions offered during last year's school summer holiday period also proved popular and it is proposed that the initiative is repeated in 2026.

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.

Environment Committee

30 June 2026

- 2.2 The scheme was launched in April 2024, and residents were 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. To encourage continued participation in the scheme, the price has been fixed at the introductory rate for 2025/26 and 2026/27.
- 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 Income, Expenditure and Utilisation

- 3.1 Table 1 below sets out the income received from ad-hoc court bookings, memberships and coaching agreements (net of card payment fees), together with the maintenance and software costs incurred during 2025/26. Whilst tennis income exceeded the budgeted level, maintenance expenditure of £21,140.11 was incurred for repainting and line marking works at Court Recreation Ground and Alexandra Park tennis courts. As a result, a drawdown of £7,984.46 was made from the Repairs and Renewals Reserve, reducing the reserve balance from £16,411 to £8,426.54.
- 3.2 In addition to membership and ad-hoc booking income, the Council has received approximately £9,662 from tennis coaching package agreements. These agreements enable approved coaches to delivery coaching session from Borough tennis courts whilst contributing towards the ongoing maintenance and operation of the facilities.
- 3.3 Table 2 below shows the number of memberships and ad-hoc bookings sold between April 2024 and 15 May 2026.

Environment Committee
30 June 2026

2025/26 Tennis performance	Budget (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
Tennis Income (net of card payment fees and including coaching income)	17,500.00	31,634.62	14,134.62
Tennis Maintenance costs	0	-21,140.11	-21,140.11
Clubspark Software costs	-2,380.00	-3,358.97	-978.97
Net shortfall	15,120.00	7,135.54	-7,984.46

Repairs and Renewals Reserve	Balance at 01/04/25 (£)	Drawdown to fund maintenance works (£)	Reserve Balance remaining (£)
Repairs and Renewals	16,411	-7,984.46	8,426.54

Table 1- Income and Expenditure 2025/26

Number of Memberships, Discounted Memberships and Ad-Hoc Bookings				
Financial Year	Ad-hoc Bookings Non-Members	Discounted Family Membership	Annual Family Membership	Grand Total
2024/25	1404	19	249	1672
2025/26	1868	21	295	2184
2026/27	336	3	67	406
Grand Total	3608	43	611	4262

Table 2 - Number of memberships and ad-hoc bookings up to 15 May 2026

3.4 The graphs shown in Appendix One demonstrate utilisation at each of the five sites.

4 Maintenance of the Tennis Courts

4.1 During 2025/26, the following works were completed:

- Moss treatment – all sites
- Leaf blowing/sweeping – all sites
- Court cleaning, surface binder, repainting and line marking at Court Recreation Ground and Alexandra Park

Planned maintenance for 26/27 includes:

- Moss treatment – all sites
- Leaf blowing/sweeping – all sites
- Court cleaning, surface repairs, surface binder and repainting at Auriol Park

Environment Committee

30 June 2026

- 4.2 Two Neighbourhood CIL bids have been submitted by Councillors Coley and Woodbridge for the regeneration of the tennis and basketball courts at Poole Road and Gibraltar Recreation Grounds. These bids have been approved by the CIL Panel and will now be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee for final approval. If successful, both sites will also benefit from the introduction of pickleball, a rapidly growing sport that offers inclusive opportunities for participation across a wide range of ages and abilities.

5 Free Tennis Sessions

- 5.1 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.

Site	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	9am-11am
Poole Road	9am-11am	9am-11am

6 Free Summer Tennis

- 6.1 Last year, a total of 566 bookings were made under the free morning tennis scheme during the summer holiday period, demonstrating significant public demand for the initiative. Bookings made at each site during the period were:
- Alexandra Park - 203
 - Auriol Park – 75
 - Court Recreation Ground – 164
 - Gibraltar Recreation Ground - 36
 - Poole Road - 88
- 6.2 Due to the popularity of the initiative, it is proposed that members agree to offer a similar scheme in 2026.
- 6.3 The proposal is to offer free morning tennis sessions (up to 12 noon) from 22 July 2026 to 31 August 2026, covering the school holiday period.

Environment Committee

30 June 2026

- 6.4 The scheme acts as an introduction to the Clubspark online booking platform and the Borough's tennis facilities, providing residents with an opportunity to try the facilities before committing to a paid membership or making ad-hoc bookings.

7 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

7.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1.1 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.

7.2 Crime & Disorder

- 7.2.1 None for the purpose of this report

7.3 Safeguarding

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

7.4 Dependencies

- 7.4.1 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.

7.5 Other

- 7.5.1 None

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The income generated by the scheme is set out in section 3 of this report. As agreed by the Environment Committee on 13 June 2023, all income raised will be used to pay the annual Clubspark software administration fee and to fund the ongoing maintenance and refurbishment of the tennis courts.
- 8.2 The proposed free summer sessions are expected to be accommodated within existing budgets and are not anticipated to have material impact on the overall annual income.

Environment Committee

30 June 2026

8.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are within the body of the report.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 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.

9.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report

Environment Committee

30 June 2026

10 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

10.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Safe and Well
- Smart and Connected
- Effective Council

10.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

10.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None

10.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Pay to Play Tennis ensures the ongoing sustainability of Park Tennis in the borough.

10.5 **Partnerships:** The Lawn Tennis Association and Tennis Coaching Providers.

11 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

- Tennis in the Borough Report – 13 June 2023
- Annual Review of Tennis in the Borough – 17 March 2025

Other papers: none