

# HEDGE END, WEST END AND BOTLEY LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

Monday, 1 November 2021

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

### Report of the Local Area Manager

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#### Recommendation

It is recommended that this Committee:

- 1) approves the stated fees and charges for Itchen Valley Country Park for 2022; and
  - 2) approves the freezing of fees and charges at Hedge End Station car park.
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#### Summary

Fees and Charges for Council services are reviewed on a regular basis. In accordance with the Council's budget strategy, fees and charges levied by the Council are reviewed with the intention of increasing yield linked to inflation. The yield target this year is 3%. This report sets out the proposed amendments to the fees and charges at Itchen Valley Country Park (IVCP).

#### Statutory Powers

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011

#### Strategic Implications

1. Income from fees and charges at IVCP support the ongoing management and maintenance of the site. The country park contributes to the Council's strategic aims of a Green Borough and Healthy Community. The proposed fees and charges are broadly in line with the projected yield stipulated by corporate policy.

#### Itchen Valley Fees and Charges

2. The Council agrees an annual strategy regarding fees and charges. In 2022/23 the target yield is 3%. This Committee has the authority to set the fees and charges at IVCP. The proposed changes take account of the Masterplan proposals and associated business case and support the long-term plans for the site.

3. Councillors will recall that in November 2020, this Committee approved the freezing of fees and charges at IVCP in light of the impact of the pandemic. For 2022/23, changes to the fees and charges have been proposed. The Country Parks Manager has discussed these changes with the Local Area Manager and the proposals are set out in Appendix One.
4. The key changes to note are as follows:
5. Currently, the barbeque charges have been split with separate charging rates for bookings on Monday-Thursday and Friday-Sunday. Moving forward, the Country Parks Manager has recommended that the charging moves to a single pricing structure to simplify the offer.
6. If school parties wish to hire a room at IVCP, the Kingfisher Room is the only available option. Reference to 'classroom hire' is therefore proposed to be removed as the hire of the Kingfisher Room is listed separately.
7. The introduction of a whole class charge for an educational visit replaces the existing per child charge for visits/activities led by Council staff. This change reflects the industry standard for day visit charges and better reflects the fixed costs of delivery of school visits. For comparison, for a class of 30, per head cost would be £5.83.
8. The Kingfisher Room is available for rental per hour with a minimum charge of 2 hours. The on-costs for a short-duration rental are the same as full day costs. The charge is therefore recommended to increase by 7.69% to £28.00 (an increase of £2.00) to reflect booking and cleaning requirements.
9. The base level charge for guided walks is proposed to be removed to reflect the new approach to public engagement which seeks to set charges for individual guided walks depending on the nature of the walk and the target audience. This year, the Country Parks Manager was able to secure grant funding to deliver heavily subsidised or free walks for low-income groups. Further opportunities are being explored to continue this outreach provision.
10. Car parking rates have been frozen for the last 18 months and it is necessary to see an increase in prices this year. While the rates have increased an average of 3.68% across all tariff bands, the changes aim to incentivise longer visit times by freezing or decreasing upper bands. It is necessary to increase the lower bands by 10p increments as the pay machines do not accept lower denominations of coins. Increases are also proposed to permit charges, following the price freeze last year. There are relatively few permits in circulation (approx. 400 out of 92,000 car visits annually) and their value to the site and users will be reviewed once the ANPR system is delivered as part of the Masterplan.

### **Hedge End Station Car Park**

11. Due to the impact of Covid-19 and the associated change in residents working arrangements, the usage of the Hedge End Station car park has been very low and remains well below normal levels. In light of the current lack of

recovery and the continued uncertainty, it is proposed that the fees and charges at this site are frozen for 2022/23.

## **Financial Implications**

12. The fees and charges must be implemented in order to achieve the corporate target of 3% yield.
13. At IVCP, the budgeted outturn for car parking in 2022/23 is £182,000. In 2020/21, the actual outturn was £200,000. The average parking spend for 2020/21 was £2.52; the average spend this year since April is £2.90. The business plan for the site seeks to encourage longer dwell time with a masterplan target of 50% migration of short-term users (1-2 hours) up a band to the next tariff. The available data for this year indicates that this migration has already started as a result of the changes in programming at the country park. The proposed parking charges further incentivise this shift and it is considered that the yield will exceed the 3% target. The delivery of the masterplan will facilitate the achievement of this longer-term target.

## **Risk Assessment**

14. If the Committee does not comply with the corporate fees and charges policy and the income target is not achieved, then it will be liable for any shortfall at IVCP. A shortfall at Hedge End Station car park would be met corporately, as the recommendation to freeze the charges as been proposed by the service rather than this Committee (provided the Committee accepts the recommendation). Should income targets for IVCP not be achieved, there is the potential for an impact on service delivery at the site and the wider masterplan may need to be reviewed.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

15. The Equality Act is not relevant to the majority of decisions in this report because they do not have equality and diversity implications. Due regard has been had to equality issues as free car parking has been retained for those with disabilities.
16. The main income streams for IVCP are parking and catering, neither of which can be means tested. However, the charges for these are deliberately set to be affordable to a wider audience. For example, the car parking charges are lower than the parking charges for the nearest competitor parks (for example, the current one-hour parking tariff at Royal Victoria Country Park is £1.80).
17. The Park has offered targeted, grant-funded sessions this year, which have provided free access, transport and activities for low-income families. Free guided walks have also been provided specifically for isolated elderly residents.

## **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

The provision of car parking and affordable parking charges within the site continues to encourage visitors to drive to the country park, which has an environmental impact. Balanced with this, affordable parking charges enable visitors, and particularly families, to continue to enjoy the facilities at Itchen Valley Country Park, which aims to educate its visitors about the environment and sustainability. While the site is currently not easily accessible by public transport, cycle parking is provided to encourage sustainable travel. In future years, there may be the opportunity to link the Country Park to a wider cycle route network through the delivery of a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) associated with the One Horton Heath development.

## **Conclusion**

18. The Committee is requested to approve the fees and charges at Itchen Valley Country Park as set out above and at Appendix One.

KITTY BUDDEN  
LOCAL AREA MANAGER

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Appendices Attached: 1

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D**

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

None.

Appendix One

Itchen Valley Country Park: Fees and Charges 2022

Itchen Valley Country Park			
	1 April 2021	1 January 2022	Change %
<b>Barbeque Charges</b>			
Up to 60 people Monday-Thursday	48.00	Remove	n/a
Up to 60 people	64.00	66.00	3.13
Over 60 people Monday-Thursday	77.00	Remove	n/a
Over 60 people	90.00	93.00	3.33
<b>School Parties</b>			
Classroom hire	58.00	Remove	n/a
Visit/ activity led by EBC staff, per child	5.60	Remove	n/a
Whole class education visit	New charging rate	175.00	n/a
<b>General Guided Walks (Minimum charge)</b>			
Adults	4.00	Remove	n/a
Concessions	3.00	Remove	n/a
<b>Kingfisher Room</b>			
Room hire per hour (minimum charge 2 hours)	26.00	28.00	7.69
Room hire for parties (up to 5 hours)	58.00	60.00	3.45
<b>Hire of High Hill Field (minimum charge)</b>			
<b>Charitable Organisations</b>			
- Up to 1000 people	372.00	372.00	0.00
- Over 1000 people	680.00	680.00	0.00
<b>Non-charitable Organisations</b>			
- Up to 1000 people	680.00	680.00	0.00
- Over 1000 people	1630.00	1630.00	0.00
<b>Car Parking</b>			
Up to one hour	1.50	1.70	13.33

Up to two hours	2.80	2.90	3.57
Up to three hours	4.00	4.00	0.00
Four hours +	4.60	4.50	-0.10
Other Parking Charges			
Coaches	22.00	23.00	4.55
Orange/ Blue badges	Free	Free	n/a
Motorcycles	Free	Free	n/a
Annual permits	49.00	51.00	4.08
6 monthly permits	27.00	29.00	7.41
Quarterly permits	17.00	19.00	11.76