Report of: Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing

Meeting of: Date Agenda item Ward(s)
Executive 22 November 2012 D1 All

Delete as appropriate Non-exempt

SUBJECT: Leisure Fees and Charges 2013

1. Synopsis

1.1 This report sets out the proposed schedule of fees and charges for Islington’s leisure facilities for next year, taking effect from 1 January 2013 and whether they are managed by Aquaterra Leisure, Greenwich Leisure Limited or the Council’s Greenspace Team.

1.2 The pricing for Ironmonger Row Baths and the wider leisure estate are key to the accessibility of the Leisure Services. The Council has a comprehensive concessionary pricing scheme with both its operators in order to ensure usage is reflective of the local demography. Current usage patterns reflect this with over 75% of memberships from people on concessions. The pricing proposals set out in this report take into account the Council’s budgetary pressures whilst still maintaining significant concessionary pricing across the Council’s leisure estate, particularly targeted at younger and older people, those on low income and the disabled.

1.3 The leisure industry sets its fees and charges to take effect from 1 January each year and it is therefore necessary for this report to be considered outside the Council’s normal budget setting process.

1.4 To ensure that Aquaterra and Greenwich Leisure Limited are able to respond to both the fluctuating leisure market, their competitors and increase the opportunities for customers to take up special offers, it is sometimes necessary to change prices during the year and provision for this is included in the recommendations below.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To agree the schedule of fees and charges set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of this report.

2.2 To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration to authorise in year changes to leisure fees and charges.
3. Background

3.1 Having had the most amazing summer of sport, Islington wants to build on the success of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and deliver a true lasting legacy to its residents.

3.2 The Olympic and Paralympic Spirit in Islington was captured in providing events such as the:

- Highbury Fields “Give it a Go” event which saw over 6000 people taking part in 19 Olympic sports on Torch Relay day;
- Schools’ Torch Relay Event, where 27 schools made their own Olympic torches and 100 young people took these along with Olympic Torches from the 1948 and 1956 Games across the Borough, covering 16 miles and with over 4000 people supporting it along the way;
- Free Swimming Programme for young people aged 16 and under, with over 7,500 free swimming visits being taken up;
- Delivered a free under 18 sports programme delivered across our parks and estates;
- Olympic Training venue for Volleyball, hosted at the Sobell Leisure Centre;
- New sports facilities provided at Highbury Fields sports pitches and improvements to tennis facilities at Rosemary Gardens;
- Proposals for improved facilities in the future at Sobell Leisure centre, St Marks Primary School pitch, Market Road pitches and ground /changing room improvements to Tufnell Park;
- Introduction of the Saturday Night Youth Project managed by Aquaterra, which is held monthly and attracting upwards of 500 young people;
- Introduction of online bookings for tennis and sports pitches across all Greenspace sports facilities.

One of the many impacts has been a marked increase in new participants in our sports clubs since the Olympics.

3.3 The Council is building upon this success with the reopening of the refurbished Ironmonger Row Baths and is seeking to deliver a lasting legacy to its residents for future generations. We aim to work closely with the newly appointed operator for this centre, Greenwich Leisure Limited, to expand the numbers of people taking part in sport and physical activity and create a new local workforce that delivers improved services to local people.

3.4 However, the cost of leisure provision across the whole sector has increased, particularly with regards to staffing and utilities and these costs need offsetting by increased income and increased usage just to maintain the current provision. Regular improvements across the estate are required to keep pace with customer demand and the Council is seeking to deliver efficiency savings as well as deliver high quality customer services.

3.5 Both Aquaterra Leisure and Greenwich Leisure Limited are contributing to the Council’s overall MTFS. A high proportion of revenue from this sector is yielded from the Health & Fitness and Personal Treatment market which in turn subsidises other sporting facilities and activities. The competitiveness in pricing for this area is a significant factor in business planning with a very high presence of private sector gyms in Islington and the surrounding areas.

3.6 The previous policy to have Premium Pricing at Highbury Pool & Fitness Centre and Ironmonger Row Baths has been reviewed and we have withdrawn it for the over 60’s and for concessions. Standard Members will also be allowed to use a Premium Facility 3 times in any 3 month period before being required to upgrade to premium membership.

3.7 It is important to note that the fees and charges for swimming and fitness activities at Ironmonger Row Baths are the same as those at Highbury Pool and Fitness Centre.

3.8 We want to protect the price of memberships for the over 60’s and for disabled users, and have made increasing participation and uptake by disabled users a particular focus this year. We have asked that both operators develop and further expand disabled sports programmes and review disabled customer needs as well as also introduce new initiatives such as Inclusive Fitness initiatives. We have introduced...
many accessibility features in the IRB development which will contribute to this drive.

3.9 The Council has ensured that despite having two operators it will maintain Izz Card access across all its leisure estate, ensuring that residents and other customers can benefit from access across all our extensive range of facilities and services.

3.10 The Council has maintained its policy for subsidised swimming with £1 swimming for young people at all its pools including the newly refurbished Ironmonger Row Baths, and free swimming for Over 60’s at Off Peak times. Other initiatives to ensure increased uptake and improved access include free community play at several Greenspace sites with some being targeted at specific groups e.g. tennis for the over 60’s. Extensive programmes continue to be developed in a range of services across the leisure estate and the appointment of both Netball and Tennis development officers will see this developed further.

4 Implications

4.1 Financial implications:
There is an assumed reduction in the management fee paid by the Council to Aquaterra over the medium term and the increases in fees and charges from January 2013 will enable Aquaterra to deliver its business plan. The introduction of a revenue generating contract for Ironmonger Row Baths will also generate contributions to the MTFS

4.2 Legal Implications:
The Council may fix such charges as the authority thinks fit for use of its recreational facilities (section 19(2) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 1976). Under the leisure services contract, the Council retains responsibility for fixing the charges for the recreational and leisure facilities provided by Aquaterra Leisure and Greenwich Leisure Limited at the Council's leisure establishments.

4.3 Environmental Implications
Fees and charges are the way the estate is financed. One way of reducing fees and charges is to increase the efficiency of the estate particularly in relation to energy usage.

Finsbury and IRB are to be powered by Bunhill Combined Heat and Power Project which will reduce both usage and cost. Pool Covers also help reduce energy usage and have now been installed at Cally Pool and Archway as well as Ironmonger Row Baths.

4.4 Equality Impact Assessment:
The Council has standardised its approach to concessionary pricing across all centres so as to ensure that accessibility of services is achieved across all the estate, providing subsidised activities and targeted pricing. The Council continues to provide innovative programmes to ensure uptake from all sectors of the community and has set targets this year on increasing uptake from disabled users.

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The proposed fees and charges will enable Islington Council to maintain this high volume customer service and we will continue to provide targeted concessionary pricing to ensure accessibility. This will continue to contribute to making Islington a healthier and more active place.
Appendices
Appendix 1 - Fees and Charges for Archway, Caledonian Pool, Finsbury Leisure Centre, Highbury Pool, Market Road and the Tennis Centre
Appendix 2 - Fees and Charges for Ironmonger Row Baths
Appendix 3 - Fees and Charges for Greenspace

Background papers: none

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing

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