

Committee: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 4 July 2018

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| Subject: | Parks Tennis Summer Promotion |
| Lead Officer: | Head of Leisure and Cultural Services |
| Portfolio Holder: | Cllr Malcolm Howard |
| Link to Council Priorities: | P1, P2, P3 |
| Exempt information: | None |
| Delegated status: | For recommendation to Council on 18 July 2018 |
| Key decision: | N/A |

Executive Summary:

The Council launched the new parks tennis booking and gate access system and introduced fees & charges across all twelve parks tennis venues on 12th June 2017.

Further to significant feedback from residents, a number of operational changes were made to the Parks Tennis scheme in the summer of 2017. This report provides an overview of the first years' operation and a proposed summer promotion offering 6 weeks free tennis at all twelve Parks Tennis venues.

Recommendation: that Members support the introduction of a 6 week summer promotion of free tennis at all twelve Council owned Parks Tennis venues.

Report:

1. Background

2. The Council launched the Parks Tennis scheme (including booking and gate access system in seven venues) and introduced fees & charges across all twelve parks tennis venues on 12th June 2017.

3. Further to significant feedback from residents in the summer of 2017, a number of changes were made to the Parks Tennis scheme, including a new free tennis membership with free court access all year round for 2 hours a day every weekday at every venue.

4. The remaining 4 sites had new gates activated in May 2018 and have been well received. The final gate at West End Recreation Ground is due to be installed in the Autumn.

5. Current usage

6. Whilst there has been some local opposition to the scheme, overall memberships and pay and play access have been on or ahead of target for the first full year of operation:

| Measure | Year 1 target | Year 1 achieved |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Number of household memberships sold (a household can sign up for 1 membership to cover 5 people living at the same address) | 343 | 446 |
| Number of unique "members" (i.e. total number of registered members, so for instance 5 people at 1 address would be 5 members.) | 646 (av. 2 members per membership) | 1,090 |
| Number of unique "pay & play" players (i.e. total number of individual people who register to access the courts and pay on each visit- not members.) | 154 | 708 |
| Total number of court bookings | 5000 | 12,113 |

7. **Coaching providers**

8. Following a procurement exercise, three tennis coaching providers were successful in a bid to provide coaching to 7 of the 12 park tennis courts, until August 2021 to a total annual income of £4,850.
9. There are 5 remaining sites, not taken up at tender, that are therefore available for casual coaching. These sites have been promoted to other coaches on a non-exclusive basis (i.e. more than one coach can work at that site) This has been based on £5 per court, per hour, with a maximum allowance of 10 hours per week. The terms and conditions of this package state that the coach will not get any preferential booking and will still have to book up to 7 days advance. £2,685 has been generated over the last year from casual coaching.

Coaching providers have taken up this package at 3 of the sites:

- Cricket Way
- Oatlands Recreation Ground
- Grovelands Recreation Ground

There has been no casual coaching take up at present at West End and Giggs Hill.

10. **Summer promotion**

11. Mindful of some of the continuing local concerns, officers working closely with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), have considered a further 6-week free promotional offer to coincide with the state school summer holiday from the end of July 2018.
12. To administer the scheme, and the necessary associated booking information, the terms and conditions that are proposed are:
- 6 week promotional offer, allowing any registered user free use of courts;

- Any user would need to register for a 6 week free pass in order to book (i.e. a 6 week free membership);
 - Would limit each user to a 2 hour max booking, per day (same as annual members), and can book up to 7 days in advance;
 - Seek to offer any existing annual member a 6 week extension of their membership;
 - There would be no change to private coaching providers.
13. Alongside the free 6 week promotion, Officers would continue to work to promote and increase opportunities for the local community alongside the Great British Tennis weekend:
- Appoint a new fixed term Tennis Development Officer to drive increased usage and other targeted free sessions. This would be a qualified coach who could provide free coached sessions in targeted areas;
 - Launch Tennis For Free initiative at the Civic Centre and Elm Grove in partnership with our local tennis coaching provider to offer an element of free tennis on Sundays, in order to encourage new people into the sport of tennis in a fun and safe surrounding.
 - Work with coaching providers to deliver community\ free coached activities on courts.
14. The Great British Tennis Weekend (GBTW) is an initiative to help tennis clubs and venues attract new people from the local community to come and try out tennis at a local venue. The LTA coordinates a country-wide marketing campaign to raise awareness of GBTW, particularly targeting families to try tennis for free at a GBTW event. This alongside free marketing materials provided by the LTA to help promote open days locally, this aims to help raise awareness of the local tennis offer in the wider community.
15. The Tennis Development Officer post has been interviewed and offer made. The part time salary including on cost is £16,700. The LTA had committed £7,500 to contribute to the salary of the Officer. If the LTA decide to withdraw the offered of funding due to the risks posed around the sustainability of the scheme, the remaining £9,200 will be found within existing leisure salaries for this year.
16. **Implications**
17. As this is a change from the original model, some of the forecasted income for this current financial year may not be achievable as 6 weeks pay and play income will now be foregone, and some annual members may decide not to renew their memberships which are due for renewal during the free period.
18. Further admin support will be required to make the changes to the booking system to enable the free use of the courts to be monitored.

This has been estimated to cost £1000.

19. This free offer will need to be carefully communicated to the community to ensure that this is understood. Further training will also be provided for Customer Services who will be answering any queries on the scheme. The training has been estimated to cost £500 with a further £5000 for marketing.
20. **LTA position**
21. The LTA have been supportive of the Elmbridge Parks Tennis scheme, as they feel that the scheme currently has the right balance of free and paid, supporting the LTAs strategy of encouraging sustainable models.
22. The LTA are comfortable that a 6 weeks free summer promotion is sustainable, however there is a small financial risk at the peak for the tennis season – and the greatest opportunity for when income could be generated though tennis and the park sites.
23. The LTA are keen to support the 6 weeks free during the summer as a one off for this year, although as mentioned above this would still pose a small financial risk. However due to the long term impact on sustainability, the LTA would not be able to support this if this was to become part of an annual summer programme (or the model was changed permanently from charged to free).
24. Total financial support of £36,500 has been provided by the LTA to Elmbridge BC to support a sustainable tennis model throughout the Borough
 - Financial support for gates (£25k)
 - Financial support for marketing (£4k)
25. **Review**
26. A further review of the scheme will be presented to members at the end of the summer period.

Financial implications:

The anticipated costs of the free 6 week promotion will be an estimated £8,000 as summarised below.

In 2017/18 we received £20,227 income from the scheme, and a substantial amount of this could be at risk if users decide not to continue with the scheme at the end of the 6 week promotion or not renew their annual membership.

| | £ |
|---|--------------|
| Changes to booking system | 1,000 |
| Customer Services training | 500 |
| Marketing 6 week promotion | 5,000 |
| Estimated value of 6 weeks pay and play | 1,500 |
| TOTAL | 8,000 |

Environmental/Sustainability Implications:

As contained within the report.

Legal implications:

None

Equality Implications:

As contained within the report

Risk Implications:

As contained within the report

Community Safety Implications:

There have been a handful of issues of vandalism on the courts. These have been reported and Officers are working with Surrey Police to see if any other measures to deter further occurrences can be introduced.

Principal Consultees:

Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture
Corporate Management Board
Head of Finance
Head of Legal Services
Lawn Tennis Association
Leisure Development Manager
Sports Development Officer

Background papers:

None

Enclosures/Appendices:

Appendix A- current usage

Contact details:

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