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**Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

9th March, 2015

MEETING OF TRANSITION COMMITTEE – REPORT TO FOLLOW

Dear Councillor,

I enclose herewith the following report which will be considered at tonight's meeting.

Yours faithfully

Suzanne Wylie

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

2. **Reconsideration of Service Convergence - Pricing for outdoor Leisure – As per Ad-hoc Committee Decision 27/02/15 (Pages 1 - 14)**

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Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Shadow Transition Committee |
| Subject: | Service Convergence – Pricing for Outdoor Leisure |
| Date: | 9 March 2015 |
| Reporting Officers: | Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure |
| Contact Officer: | Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure |

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| 1.0 | Relevant background information |
| 1.1 | On 29 January 2015, a report was submitted to the Transition Committee setting out proposals as to how the Council may wish to manage the converging of prices for comparable services currently provided by Lisburn City Council (LCC), Castlereagh Borough Council (CBC) and North Down (ND) in those areas transferring to Belfast. |
| 1.2 | At that meeting, the Transition Committee agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a general principle that Belfast prices would be applied to services delivered in the transferring areas which will mean that in the majority of cases transferring users and residents will experience a reduction in service prices. (ii) in relation to Street Trading Licenses, whereby a significant price difference would be experienced, that a phased approach (i.e. incremental levelling of prices over a 4 year period) would be applied. (iii) further consideration be given to the differential in prices for outdoor leisure provision, specifically 3G Pitch usage, in assets transferring from LCC and that a separate report be brought back to Committee for consideration. |
| 1.3 | At its meeting on 10 February, the Transition Committee agreed to retain the Lisburn City Council rate for the hire of 3G pitches at the Brook Activity Centre for a period of 12 months, that is, from 1st April 2015 until 31st March 2016. This would not be in line with the agreed charges for other activities or services. |
| 1.4 | Under Section 41 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provides that a Council's Standing Orders must make provision requiring reconsideration of a Committee decision (Call In). The Ad Hoc Committee for Call-in met on 27 February to consider the challenge and recommended that the decision be referred back to the next meeting of the Transition Committee. |

| 2.0 | Key issues |
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| | <p>The Call-In challenged the decision of the Transition Committee of Belfast District Council made on 10 February 2015 under the heading ‘Service Convergence – Pricing for Outdoor Leisure’. This was on grounds that it is procedurally deficient due to it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Creating a separate charging structure for one facility when all other such facilities within the council area operate under a single charging structure and doing so; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) for no substantive reason, or (b) on no reasonable grounds, or (c) without due or adequate consideration, or (d) without consideration of all relevant or material information or specifically without due consideration of the difference in charges between this centre and every other centre once VAT advantage is applied, or (e) without a due or appropriate or adequate consideration of Equality issues, or (f) without due or adequate consultation, or (g) to the detriment of specific user groups of that centre without due or adequate consideration or due or adequate consultation. ii. Charging youth teams substantially more to use that facility at peak times than they are charged to use any similar facility within the council area at peak times; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) for no substantive reason, or (b) on no reasonable grounds, or (c) without due or adequate consideration, or (d) without due consideration of all relevant or material information or specifically without consideration of the level of or the impact on youth team use of the centre, or (e) without a due or appropriate or adequate consideration of Equality issues, or (f) without due or adequate consultation, or (g) contrary to the council’s stated policy of increasing youth participation in sport and acting contrary to this policy without due or adequate consideration or due or adequate consultation. |
| | <p>Pricing Policy</p> <p>Currently, charges for 3G pitches are set in accordance with the Parks and Leisure departmental pricing policy, which sets out a consistent charge for all 3G pitches across the city. A full equality impact assessment was carried out on this policy in 2002.</p> <p>It is the intention over the coming months to present a corporate pricing policy to Committee for its consideration. This will harmonise processes, prices and booking conditions across the new Council area, and will be subject to a full equality screening. At that point, any differential impacts will be identified and mitigating actions introduced.</p> <p>It is likely that this corporate policy, given its broad nature, will be screened in for a full</p> |

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| | <p>equality impact assessment and require a 12 week consultation.</p> |
| | <p>Previous Options for Consideration</p> <p>In advance of this corporate pricing policy, the Committee considered the following 3 options at its meeting on 10 February for the only transferring 3G pitch, located at the Brook Activity Centre:</p> <p>Option 1: Move to the Belfast City Council rate;</p> <p>Option 2: Consider the proposed BCC charges for Brooke as ‘significant’ and phase in the increase in line with the agreed approach to other transferring council charges; <i>or</i></p> <p>Option 3: Hold existing Lisburn City Council charges for 12 months.</p> <p>This was in line with the 3 options considered at the initial meeting on 29 January across all comparable services including Building Control and Community Services.</p> |
| | <p>Equality implications</p> <p>Further detail on the equality implications for each option is set out below for Members’ consideration:</p> <p>Option 1: Across the city, a consistent charge for all 3G pitches is based on the Council’s annual scale of charges which derives from the departmental pricing policy. The policy was equality screened in 2002. The price differential between BCC and LCC is set out in the appendix.</p> <p>There is an adverse price differential for those groups/clubs who pay full rate. There is a positive price differential across all concession groups.</p> <p>A potential mitigating action is that officers will work with those groups/clubs who pay full rate, to ensure that they can avail of the best rate possible and reduce the adverse impact.</p> <p>Option 2: In previous consideration, Transition Committee deemed the price differential as significant for street trading licences i.e. this was a sudden and adverse increase of approx £1,000 for a recurring service. As per the table in the appendix, there is no price differential of this scale.</p> <p>Option 3: This would not be in line with the agreed charges for other activities or services and would sit outside the Council’s scale of charges derived from the current departmental pricing policy. It would have a positive price differential for those groups/clubs who pay full rate. It would have a negative impact across all concession groups, particularly in terms of age (i.e. schools and juvenile teams) as a Section 75 group. In a recent update report to Parks and Leisure Committee (24 February 15), it was noted that there is an under-supply of provision for youth teams in the city.</p> <p>A potential mitigating action is that sports development officers could work with schools and juvenile teams to maintain participation levels. However, they would still be adversely impacted by this pricing policy.</p> <p>Options 1 and 3 would be deemed to have minor impacts, as outlined above, as this would be a temporary arrangement until such times as the Council introduces a revised</p> |

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| | corporate pricing policy. The Council can introduce mitigating measures as outlined above. |
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3.0 Resource Implications

Financial: If a decision is taken to retain current LCC prices for 15/16, there may be a potential loss of income of £4-5k.

Staff: None

Assets: None

4.0 Equality Implications

As outlined above.

5.0 Committee decisions required

Committee is asked to consider the information presented above and determine its preferred option in relation to either:

Option 1: Move to Belfast City Council rates

Option 3: Hold existing Lisburn City Council charges for 12 months

6.0 Documents Attached

1. Table setting out price differentials
2. Minute from Transition Committee 10 February 2015 Service Convergence Pricing for Outdoor Leisure
3. Concessionary rates matrix, as tabled at Transition Committee 10 February 2015
4. Call-in Requisition 13 February 2015

Proposed 15/16 Charge for Use of 3G pitch at Brooke

Booking per Hour

| Description | LCC | BCC | BCC x Vat for Block Booking * |
|---|--------|--------|-------------------------------|
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, full pitch | £60.00 | £82.00 | £68.30 |
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, full pitch - concession | £40.00 | £41.00 | £34.15 |
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, half pitch | £30.00 | £41.00 | £34.15 |
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, half pitch - concession | £20.00 | £20.50 | £17.10 |

Brooke Activity Centre 3G Pitch Match Price (90 minute booking)

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| Description | LCC | BCC | BCC x Vat for Block Booking * |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Senior Full Price | £100 | 123.00 | 102.45 |
| School / Community | £90 | 61.50 | 51.20 |
| Junior (under 14) | £85 | 61.50 | 51.20 |
| School / Community Under 14 | £75 | 61.50 | 51.20 |
| Under 12 ** | £70 | 41.00 | 34.15 |
| School / Community Under 12 ** | £60 | 41.00 | 34.15 |
| Sunday | £100 | as above. No Sunday differentiation | |

* Note: Set criteria must be met for vat exemption to be applied, notably;

A Block booking is 10 or more sessions or a booking for more than 24hrs. Each session is for the same activity and in the same place. The interval between each session is at least a day but not more than 14 days. The facilities are let out to a school, club association or an organisation representing affiliated clubs or constituent associations such as local league

** Note: Under 12 booking are for 1 hour only

For comparison as an example of what was agreed as a "Significant, adverse, increase" and an incremental increase applied

| STREET TRADING | BCC | CBC | LCC | NDBC |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Mobile Licence Application Fee | £120 | N/A | £90 | £38 |
| Mobile licence Fee – Mon to Sun | £882 | £342 | £325 | N/A |

- Agree in principle to the approach being undertaken to scope out a possible regional business start programme
- Note the proposals for a more localised approach to social economy support and business growth support, linking to the range of infrastructure investments in the city and taking account of key growth sectors in Belfast."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Service Convergence - Pricing for Outdoor Leisure

(Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

"1 Background

- 1.1 On 29 January 2015, a report had been submitted to the Transition Committee setting out proposals as to how the Council may wish to manage the converging of prices for comparable services currently provided by Lisburn City Council (LCC), Castlereagh Borough Council (CBC) and North Down (ND) in those areas transferring to Belfast.
- 1.2 To inform this report, a detailed analysis and comparison was undertaken of the scope of services, and associated scale of charges (prices) applied across the councils. The findings of this work indicated that the Belfast level of charge is generally lower than that of the other Councils.

The analysis identified that for street trading licences the Belfast service charge is significantly higher than that applied by LCC/CBC in the transferring area. Significant had been defined as being a sudden and adverse increase in price for recurring services, as a direct result of the boundary extension, when converging the transferring area price to the Belfast price.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Following discussion, the Transition Committee agreed:

- (i) a general principle that Belfast prices would be applied to services delivered in the transferring areas which will mean that in the majority of cases transferring users and residents will experience a reduction in service prices.

- (ii) in relation to Street Trading Licenses, whereby a significant price difference would be experienced, that a phased approach (i.e. incremental levelling of prices over a 4 year period) would be applied.
- (iii) further consideration be given to the differential in prices for outdoor leisure provision, specifically 3G Pitch usage, in assets transferring from LCC and that a separate report be brought back to Committee for consideration.

2.2 The purpose of this report is to outline the position in regards to any potential differential between the charges applied by BCC for outdoor leisure: 3G Synthetic Pitch provision as compared to LCC as well as some of the key considerations which Members may need to take into consideration.

3G Synthetic Pitch

2.3 Members will note that there is only 1 asset transferring from LCC which is affected (i.e. Brooke Activity Centre). The table below sets out the current differences in charges between BCC and LCC. The greater increase in prices relates to hiring pitch (both full and half pitch) at full cost. There is insignificant increase for concession usage; however, Lisburns peak/off-peak times differ from BCC's.

| Description | BCC | LCC |
|---|--------|--------|
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, full pitch | £82.00 | £60.00 |
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, full pitch - concession | £41.00 | £40.00 |
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, half pitch | £41.00 | £30.00 |
| 3 G Synthetic Pitch Peak, half pitch - concession | £20.50 | £20.00 |

In liaison with colleagues from LCC, a summary of the usage of this facility is set out below:

- Primarily School bookings during the day at the facility (concession rate)- usage of half pitch;
- There are 18 weekly bookings at other times (after 5 and at weekends) – all bookings are for half the pitch in a casual, cash basis; and
- 10 local teams and 8 community groups book the facility

If a decision is taken to retain the current LCC charging structure for any specified period post transfer of asset to BCC,

it is estimated that there would be a potential loss in income of £4-5K (approx) per annum.

2.4 Options for Consideration

1. Move to the BCC rate. BCC will work with the existing groups to consider block booking options, where not currently applied. A block booking by a recognised team or community group secures usage and is exempt from VAT, reducing the charge applied to:
 - £68.30 for full price full pitch
 - £34.15 for concession price full pitch
 - £34.15 for full price half pitch
 - £17.10 for concession price half pitch
2. Consider the proposed BCC charges for Brooke as 'significant' and phase in the increase in line with the agreed approach to other transferring council charges
3. Hold existing LCC charges for 12 months. This would not be in line with the agreed charges for other activities or services.

2.5 Regardless of which option is agreed, P&L, via the emerging pitches strategy, are considering options for community and discounted charges. Brooke 3g pitch will be included in this exercise.

2.6 Service Continuity & Bookings

Members should note that in the interest of ensuring business continuity, Belfast have agreed to honour any bookings taken by LCC/ CBC that transcend 01 April 2015 and that the price charged at point of booking (on basis of a payment or part payment being made) will be also honoured. This mainly relates to outdoor leisure arrangements.

3 Resource Implications

If a decision is taken to retain current LCC prices for a year period, there may be a potential loss of income of £4-5K annually.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

All recommendations outlined will be taken forward within the context of the Council's equality and good relations frameworks. Communications in relation to pricing will be as

per all existing Council processes and channels (e.g. City Matters, website).

5 Recommendation

- (i) To agree the preferred option (as set out in section 2.4 above) to be applied for 3G Synthetic Pitch bookings linked to the asset transferring from LCC.”

The Director of Parks and Leisure outlined the principal aspects of the report and answered a range of Members' questions in respect of the options which had been identified.

Proposal

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor Magennis,
Seconded by Councillor Clarke,

That the Committee agrees to adopt Option 3, as set out within section 2.4 of the report, specifically to retain the Lisburn City Council rate for the hire of 3G pitches at the Brooke Activity Centre for a period of 12 months, that is, from 1st April, 2015 till 31st March, 2016.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Hussey,
Seconded by Councillor McKee,

That the Committee agrees to adopt Option 1, as set out within section 2.4 of the report, specifically to apply the Belfast rate for the hire of 3G pitches at the Brooke Activity Centre from 1st April, 2015.

On a vote by show of hands, four Members voted for the amendment and eight against and it was declared lost.

The proposal standing in the name of Councillor Magennis and seconded by Councillor Clarke was thereupon put to the meeting when eight Members voted in favour and none against and it was declared carried.

Chairman

Brooke Activity Centre 3G Pitch Match Price

| Category | Full | School/Community | Duration (hours) |
|-------------------|------|------------------|------------------|
| Senior | £100 | £90 | 1.5 |
| Junior (under 14) | £85 | £75 | 1.5 |
| Under 12 | £70 | £60 | 1 |
| Sunday | £100 | | |

If we apply proposed BCC Scale of Charges

| Category | Full | School/Community | Duration (hours) |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Senior | £123.00 | £61.50 | 1.5 |
| Junior (under 14) | £61.50 | £61.50 | 1.5 |
| Under 12 | £41.00 | £41.00 | 1 |
| Sunday | per hour, as above | | |

Community discount will be applied in off peak times. To be developed further as part of Pitches Strategy

If we apply proposed BCC Scale of Charges

| Category | Full | School/Community | Duration (hours) |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Senior | £102.45 | £51.22 | 1.5 |
| Junior (under 14) | £51.22 | £51.22 | 1.5 |
| Under 12 | £34.15 | £34.15 | 1 |
| Sunday | per hour, as above | | |

Community discount will be applied in off peak times. To be developed further as part of Pitches Strategy

Block booking can be with league and / or individual club

| For grass pitch, BCC match bookings are for 2 hours | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| | BCC | LCC |
| Full price | £51.00 | £30.00 |
| Concession price | £25.50 | £15.00 |

If VAT discount applies for block bookings

| For grass pitch, BCC match bookings are for 2 hours | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| | BCC | LCC |
| Full price | £40.80 | £30.00 |
| Concession price | £20.40 | £15.00 |

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Call-In

This Call-In is made pursuant to Standing Order 21.3

This Call-In challenges the decision of the Transition Committee of Belfast District Council made on 10 February 2015 under the heading 'Service Convergence - Pricing for Outdoor Leisure'.

On grounds that it is procedurally deficient due to it:

- 1) Creating a separate charging structure for one facility when all other such facilities within the council area operate under a single charging structure and doing so;
 - (a) for no substantive reason, or
 - (b) on no reasonable grounds, or
 - (c) without due or adequate consideration, or
 - (d) without consideration of all relevant or material information or specifically without due consideration of the difference in charges between this centre and every other centre once VAT advantage is applied, or
 - (e) without a due or appropriate or adequate consideration of Equality issues, or
 - (f) without due or adequate consultation, or
 - (g) to the detriment of specific user groups of that centre without due or adequate consideration or due or adequate consultation.

- 2) Charging youth teams substantially more to use that facility at peak times than they are charged to use any similar facility within the council area at peak times;
 - (a) for no substantive reason, or
 - (b) on no reasonable grounds, or
 - (c) without due or adequate consideration, or
 - (d) without due consideration of all relevant or material information or specifically without consideration of the level of or the impact on youth team use of the centre, or
 - (e) without a due or appropriate or adequate consideration of Equality issues, or
 - (f) without due or adequate consultation, or
 - (g) contrary to the council's stated policy of increasing youth participation in sport and acting contrary to this policy without due or adequate consideration or due or adequate consultation.

This Call-In is made by: Cllr. Hussey

Supported by the required number of members, being himself and:

Aldermen: Robinson, Kingston, McKee, McCoubrey.
Councillors: Sandford, Haire, Graham, Spence.

Date: 13 February 2015

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