



Belfast City Council

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
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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
	<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>

	<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