



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	2012/13 Scale of Charges for Parks and Leisure Services
Date:	9 February 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Jacqui Wilson, Business Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	At the special Parks and Leisure Committee on 23 January 2012 the committee agreed to defer consideration of a standard concessionary rate to be applied across all Parks and Leisure facilities, subject to further discussion and consideration of a council-wide position on concessionary rates.
1.2	The committee adopted the recommendations within the proposed scale of charges for Belfast Castle and Malone House.
1.3	The council at its meeting on 1 February 2012 agreed that the portion of the minute regarding the scale of charges insofar as it relates to the Belfast Zoo be referred back to committee for further consideration.
1.4	The committee adopted the proposed scale of charges in relation to the use of pitches, outdoor bowling, facilities management agreements, cricket, events and the proposed charges in connection with the new legislation in respect of high hedges.
1.5	The committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposed scale of charges for burials and cremations to enable further discussion at a committee briefing to be held in advance of its next scheduled meeting.
1.6	The committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposed scale of charges for indoor leisure to enable further discussion at the aforementioned committee briefing and noted that further options would be provided by the department to inform that discussion.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Information will be presented at the committee briefing setting out the options for concessions, the scale of charges for cremations and burials and

<p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p>	<p>the scale of charges for indoor leisure. See Appendix 1</p> <p>The proposals previously presented at the committee meetings on 12th, 17th and 23rd of January that relate to these areas reproduced below</p> <p><u>Concessionary Discounts</u> The concessionary rates applied by the council have been reviewed and it has been confirmed that the current situation on concessions within the organisation are a child rate applies to 16 and under and a senior rate applies to over 60s. The only other parts of the organisation other than Parks and Leisure that apply these rates are the Waterfront and Ulster Halls. However these are subject to the approval of the promoter depending on the event being promoted.</p> <p>The review of fees and charges within the department has highlighted the variety of concessions within the different activities in the department that range from 20% to 70% discount. It is proposed that a concessionary rate of approximately 50% of the full rate will be applied across all activities in relation to over 60s, those on means tested benefits, students and children. Members should note that this would remove all other concessionary memberships including Means Tested Benefits (MTB) membership</p> <p><u>Belfast Zoo (Appendix 2)</u> A benchmarking exercise was carried out with other zoos in the UK and Ireland. The results show that Belfast is the cheapest zoo for adult admissions and that currently it does not charge over 60s while all other zoos apply a 10-25% average discount to this group. The proposal is to increase the summer adult admission to £10 (a £1.10 increase) and the winter admission to £8 (a £0.65 increase) and have a concession price of £5 and £4 respectively. This concession would include the over 60s. Family tickets within Belfast were also the lowest at £24.50 summer/£20 winter while others charged from £36-£50. It is proposed to increase a family ticket to £27 summer/£21.50 winter. This still represents a 10% increase on the individual price.</p> <p>An additional option Members could consider is extending free entry to the Zoo for seniors before 11am as is currently in place in leisure.</p> <p><u>Cemeteries/Crematorium(Appendix 3)</u> Party group briefings took place in December 2011 in relation to the development of the cemetery and crematorium. During those briefings proposals were discussed regarding the charges for burials and cremations. Therefore it is proposed that all historic charges in relation to double and treble fees be replaced by resident and non-resident charges. A reduced charge will still apply to Castlereagh Borough Council residents of one quarter of the difference between a resident and non resident. The administration fee applied to Castlereagh is currently being reviewed as it has been the same for a number of years.</p> <p>It is proposed that for burials a 5% increase is levied for both residents and non-residents. Following discussions at the Party Group briefings most groups agreed that an increase in crematorium charges for Belfast residents was appropriate and therefore it is proposed to increase cremation by £50</p>
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for Belfast residents. A 10% increase is to be levied on non-residents for cremations as already agreed by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting in February 2011. It is proposed that other charges will rise in line with inflation and ancillary charges will be charged in relation to the direct costs i.e. memorialisation, urns, foundations and the use of the organist and the same charge will apply to residents and non residents.

Indoor Leisure (Appendix 4)

At the committee meeting in December 2011 the framework for the review of the Boost Discount Scheme within Leisure Services was agreed. The emphasis of the framework is to promote membership rather than casual use and the charges reflect that membership provides better value for money. There will no longer be a joining fee and if you pay a year's membership you can get a discounted annual price (i.e. you pay for 10 months only). There would be one fully inclusive membership scheme at a price of £25 per month instead of two schemes (Max Boost) at £37.80 cash or £32.55 direct debit and (Big Boost) £21 currently in place. There would also be one concessionary scheme instead of the current four. The concession has been set at 50% discount for all activities except for classes and the fitness suite which are used most by casual users. The rate is 60% discount for these activities to ensure the rates are kept competitive. The concession rates of £12 per month apply to:

- 16s and under.
- students in full time education
- over 60s - entitled to free use for access before 11am Monday to Friday. Concession price applies after this.
- Means Tested Benefit charge applies at all times and is available to recipients of the following benefits and their dependent children 16 and under or in full time education: income support, job seekers allowance income based, tax credits (accompanied by health charges exemption certificate), housing benefit, pension credit, training for success scheme, asylum seekers.

Family memberships will be replaced by family sessions to promote the use of the facilities and more sessions will be made available. Family Sessions are for a family group for a maximum of five people, with no more than two adults for non-book able activities only. Currently family sessions run for only 2-3 hours per day mainly at the weekend and are for swimming. The new scheme will increase the availability of these sessions and will include access to the gym.

Legacy memberships will no longer exist and work is ongoing to move these onto the more favourable rate in the current scheme.

The new management structure within leisure will help to support the promotion of the service with the introduction of participation officers who will deliver a programme of activities and promotions to increase participation and retain existing members.

A loyalty scheme is also proposed to promote usage of the centres. The proposal is that for a casual user they will get their 10th visit free. For a monthly paying member who has 160 visits over a 12 month period they will

	<p>receive 1 months free access (13th month free). The department is continuing to develop the concept of a loyalty card and would propose that there will be further promotions that will include other activities such as visiting the zoo.</p> <p>Consultation sessions with users and non users regarding these proposed changes were undertaken within leisure centres and local shopping centres using the questionnaire attached at Appendix 6.</p>
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3	Equality and Good Relations Implications
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	<p>There are no equality implications in agreeing the 2012/13 scale of charges. The outcome of any current or proposed reviews, which may impact on the scale of charges, will however be subject to equality screening.</p>
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4	Resource Implications
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4.1	<p><u>Financial</u> Currently the impact of the economic downturn is affecting a number of the services and it is hoped that reviewing how we charge our customers will generate additional income either through increased participation, new services or the retention of existing users. The review has considered the impact of reductions in fees and there will be a financial impact if participation does not increase. However this will be addressed with an extensive marketing campaign to increase membership and to include incentives to retain members including a loyalty card.</p>
4.2	<p><u>Human Resources</u> There are no additional human resource requirements in relation to implementation of the proposed scale of charges.</p>

5.	Recommendations
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	<p>It is recommended that committee adopts the scale of charges for 2012/13, as detailed in the attached appendices, for implementation in April 2012.</p>
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6.	Decision tracking
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	<p>Officer responsible: Business Manager. Actions to be completed for 1 April 2012.</p>
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7.	Guide to abbreviations
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	<p>None.</p>
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8.	Documents attached
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	<p>Appendix 1: Options for committee briefing Appendix 2: 2012/13 Scale of Charges Belfast Zoo Appendix 3: 2012/13 Scale of Charges Burial and Cremation Appendix 4: 2012/13 Scale of Charges Indoor Leisure</p>
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