



Belfast City Council

Report to: Parks and Leisure Committee

Subject: 2013/14 Scale of Charges for Parks and Leisure Services

Date: 15 November 2012

Reporting Officer: Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure

Contact Officer: Jacqui Wilson, Business Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>At the special Parks and Leisure Committee on 9 February 2012 the committee agreed the scale of charges for the department for 2012/13</p> <p>Committee agreed 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 (up to the age of 17) to streamline the scale of charges and make them easier to understand.</p> <p>Committee was reminded of the difficult economic climate and the impact that this is having on our commercially focused services such as the Zoo, Malone House, Belfast Castle and Leisure Services.</p> <p>It was further proposed in reports in June and September 2012 that the Director be given delegated authority to approve a range of measures including promotional offers to increase memberships and discounts for special need schools.</p>

2	Key Issues
	<p><u>Belfast Castle and Malone House (Appendix 1)</u> These venues have seen income adversely affected by the economic downturn. The venues regularly benchmark against the local venues and hotels to ensure that their rates are competitive. The corporate market has been impacted significantly from the reduction in internal customers and from across the public sector and in response to this many of the room hire</p>

2.2

fees have been reduced some by up to a third to stimulate this market

It is proposed to increase charges on the weddings market by between 8-11% as the venues generate approximately 50/35% of their income each year (Belfast Castle/Malone House) in this area. Other promotions will also be put in place during the year to help stimulate usage. Committee is asked to note the use of these venues to all internal departments will be provided at a discount of 50% on normal rates.

Belfast Zoo (Appendix 2)

It is proposed to :

- Increase admissions by 5% for a summer ticket from £10 to £10.50 Adult; £5 to £5.25 for a concession.
- A winter ticket by 2% from £8 to £8.20 Adult; £4 to £4.10 for a concession.
- A family ticket has been increased by 4% from £27 to £28 in summer and 2% from £21.60 to £22 in winter. This is for up to 2 adults and 3 children and represents a 22% decrease on the individual summer price.

Cemeteries/Crematorium(Appendix 3)

Extensive briefings took place earlier this year in relation to fees and charges especially with regard to cremations.

A 10% increase on non residents charge was agreed previously by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting in February 2011 for a four year period. It is proposed that the same increase be applied again for 2013/14 for residents i.e. cremation charges to Belfast residents to rise by £50. Other charges will rise in line with inflation which is approximately 3-5% with rounding.

It is proposed that for burials a 5% increase is levied for both residents and non-residents. 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 committee 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 that charges reflect better value for money. There would also be one concessionary scheme instead of 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 apply to:

- 17s 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 17 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.

It is proposed that direct debit memberships are maintained at £25 per month with a concession rate of £12 per month to stay competitive and increase the volume of members. The majority of the remaining prices are increased between 3-5%. An exception is for private coaching which was only introduced last year and incurs a monthly fee of £100 for coaches to use our facilities and charges others for example for swimming lessons. There is a high demand for this service and it is proposed to increase this by 20% to £120 per month.

Holiday sports camps at the Ozone experienced a drop in demand with the removal of a concession rate last year and this charge is being reinstated.

Family Sessions for a family group for a maximum of five people, with no more than two adults for non-book able activities only will continue to be promoted and are currently £6 per family with a proposed increase of 3% bringing it to £6.20. The new scheme has increased the availability of these sessions and includes access to the gym.

It is proposed to put a freeze on hire charges for main halls due to low demand and artificial pitches due to under use at off peak times. An effective participation campaign and the investigation of possible promotions such as at off peak times will help to stimulate the use of these facilities.

The department is continuing to develop the concept of a loyalty card and will bring a report back to committee detailing how it will work once the systems to manage it have been fully developed.

Outdoor Leisure Appendix 5

Pitches

Earlier this year substantial benchmarking was undertaken in relation to the cost of pitches within Northern Ireland and committee accepted proposals to increase the costs of pitches books to reflect the environment and the improved standard of pitches being provided. It is proposed that for 2013/14 that an inflationary increase only is provided of 5%.

Outdoor Bowling

The proposal is to increase the cost of the adult season ticket from £30 to £31.50 with a concession ticket from £15 to £15.80; this includes children and over 60s. All other charges are up by approximately 5%.

Fees linked to FMAs (non pitch bookings)

Charges are levied by FMA partners for the users of the following sites: COB Golf Course, Mary Peters Track, Orangefield Cycling track and these will be increased in line with inflation of 5%.

Cricket

It is proposed that the charges associated with Cricket are increased by 5% to cover the costs of maintenance.

	<p><u>Events</u> In relation to events the proposal as with 12/13 is to not charge for entry to the Spring/Autumn Fairs as the charges were nominal and the administration around collecting the fees was not cost effective. The proposal is to maintain the charges for trade and society stands at these events as they were reduced last year as there had been a reduced the uptake of these stands. All other activities have increased between 4-5%.</p> <p><u>High Hedges</u> A review is currently underway regarding the first six months operation of the high hedges legislation and to date only one complaint has generated any income for the service. It is proposed that a report will be provided to committee by December to update committee on the service and provide recommendations of how the service will operate going forward. This will included recommending the appropriate charging mechanisms.</p>
--	---

3	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	<p>There are no equality implications in agreeing the 2013/14 scale of charges. The outcome of any current or proposed loyalty schemes, which may impact on the scale of charges, will however be subject to equality screening.</p>

4	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> (Inflation is currently around 2.5% however for administrative purposes many charges are rounded.) Currently the impact of the economic downturn is affecting a number of the services and it is hoped that being able to respond with timely promotions will help retain customers and attract new ones. There is an extensive marketing campaign planned to support this approach.</p> <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
	<p>It is recommended that committee adopts the scale of charges for 2013/14 as detailed in the attached appendices, for implementation in April 2012.</p>

6.	Decision tracking
	<p>Officer responsible: Business Manager. Actions to be completed for April 2013.</p>

7.	Guide to abbreviations
	None.

8.	Documents attached
	Appendix 1 2013/14 Scale of Charges Belfast Castle/Malone House Appendix 2: 2013/14 Scale of Charges Belfast Zoo Appendix 3: 2013/14 Scale of Charges Cemeteries and Crematorium Appendix 4: 2013/14 Scale of Charges Indoor Leisure Appendix 5 2013/14 Scale of Charges Outdoor Leisure