

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>HARTSHOLME COUNTRY PARK - FEES AND CHARGES</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHORS:</b>	<b>STEVE BIRD ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COMMUNITIES AND STREET SCENE</b>
	<b>JACLYN GIBSON, CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek agreement to the use of some specific charges in Hartsholme Country Park, in advance of full Council formally agreeing the Council's full table of Fees and Charge for the year ahead.
- 1.2 To seek an adjustment of the way that Fees and Charges for some areas of the Council's business are set, moving to a two year proposal, so that customers can have certainty in advance, and thus permitting earlier bookings to be taken.
- 1.3 To seek agreement to support the Council's channel shift initiatives by taking card payments only.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 Current practice is to set all fees and charges for the Council annually. This report identifies that the council has a need, in some areas of its business, to gain certainty of fees and charges for longer than one year, so as to facilitate improved trading activities.
- 2.2 This report seeks permission to take bookings based on some charges in advance of them being formally agreed at full council, and to move to agreeing proposed charges two years ahead, rather than just one.
- 2.3 Further the report seeks agreement to stop taking cash payments, with card payments being the default.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Currently the Council sets all fees and charges on a year-by-year basis.
- 3.2 However, in some trading areas, for example where advance bookings may be taken, then it has been identified that there is a demand for customers to book and pay on timetables not compatible with the council's current process.
- 3.3 An example would be where someone wishes to book and pay for a camp site pitch a year ahead. They may leave their pitch in September, and want to book to return next year, but as things stand we are unable to transact that business due

to uncertainty on price. Instead we take details and contact them after fees and charges are set, which is far from an ideal service, effectively doubling the staff time required in order to take a booking, which could be eliminated if a customer had been able to book online. It does lead to some loss of business.

- 3.4 Another example would be for such as events. Events can take more than a year to set up and as a part of this it can be helpful to develop plans and bookings based on certainty of charges.
- 3.5 It is also important to note that the ability to advertise the availability of bookings a long way ahead is also important, and that this too does not always fit well with the current fee and charge setting timetable.

#### **4. The Proposal**

- 4.1 That the table of fees and charges for Hartsholme Country Park be amended to make recommendations for two years. These have reference to the normal procedure of inflation based on 3% annually, but are also mindful of market pressures from competition, have reference to the quality of facilities offered, and customer feedback. The charges proposed therefore reflect what are considered to be rates that will protect or enhance our income generating potential.
- 4.2 A formal proposal is attached as Appendix A
- 4.3 This report also seeks agreement to the way payment is taken for bookings. At the moment, although advance payment is requested it is not always provided. In line with the council's channel shift programme, it is proposed that advance booking will be the default preference, and deposits taken by card. Deviation from this will be the exception. However, not wishing to turn bookings away, we will still take payment on arrival, but this MUST be by card. Cash will no longer be acceptable.

#### **5. Strategic Priorities**

##### 5.1 Let's drive economic growth

This report relates to services offered by the Council. The camp site is used by visitors to the city, and therefore underpins the wider tourism offer.

##### 5.2 Let's enhance our remarkable place

A vibrant events programme is a key part of encouraging people to engage with open spaces, and learn about their surroundings.

#### **6. Organisational Impacts**

##### 6.1 Finance

Fees and charges are set by full council annually. This report proposes that consideration be given to setting some fees for two years ahead. Given the relatively small number of areas affected, it is suggested that this will assist officers in adopting a more commercial approach for these services, without adding risks to the council's financial programme.

## 6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no legal implications arising from this proposal.

## 6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

This report does not impact equality, diversity or human rights in any way.

## 7. Risk Implications

### (i) Options Explored

Continue with existing fee and charge setting process- this will not permit officers to take a more commercial approach, and may deter some bookings.

Set fees and charges for two years ahead- this will give certainty for business planning and permit early bookings.

### (ii) Key Risks Associated with the Preferred Approach. None

## 8. Recommendation

8.1 That the principle of setting some fees two years ahead where there is a business need be approved and that this be reflected in future Fee and Charge setting reports to Council.

8.2 That Council approves the use of the fees and charges schedule attached at Appendix A.

**Is this a key decision?** No

**Do the exempt information categories apply?** No

**Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?** No

**How many appendices does the report contain?** One

**List of Background Papers:**

None

**Lead Officer:**

Steve Bird ADCSS  
Telephone (01522) 873421