

## Chief Executive's Budget Proposal

### OPTION: Charging for Allotments, Bowling Greens and Football Pitches

2015/16	2016/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
35	-	35

#### SUMMARY OF OPTION

The Council provides major subsidies for the maintenance and other running costs associated with football pitches, allotments and bowling greens across the borough. This option proposes that the Council implements an appropriate and reasonable price increase for people using these facilities so that, while not making the service break even, the subsidy required from the Council does reduce.

**Football Pitches;** 376 teams play on the 130 Council owned football pitches. The current price for a Type A Grade pitch, including changing and shower facilities, is £499 per year. This option would increase that charge by 10% to £549 per year.

**Bowling Greens;** 57 bowling clubs play on Council owned greens. This option would increase the annual charge for 'half share' from £1200 to £1440. The Council would still continue to subsidise this service by 85%. We will also work with bowling clubs to explore the possibility of transferring ownership and management of the greens from the Council to the clubs themselves.

**Allotments;** Fees for allotments are charged per plot. This option would increase the charge currently in place from £35.70 per year, to £52 per plot (or £1 per week).

#### IMPACT ON RESIDENTS

##### Football Pitches:

If this option is implemented, in the short term the fees they pay for this positive activity will increase and this may lead to a decrease in the number of teams playing or in young people and other people without much disposable income no longer being able to play, unless their teams or leagues can find ways to subsidise the memberships of these people. In the medium to longer term, additional funding may become available for clubs or leagues as a result of the adoption of the sports pitch strategy, enabling pitches to be rationalised and improved. If this does happen, the impact on other park users and landscape appeal of the parks affected will also need to be taken into account.

### **Bowling Clubs:**

Some service users (bowlers or parks users) would need to take on legal, financial, promotional and maintenance responsibilities. This could become a strain on the users and their families, especially over time, as those who take on the responsibilities become advanced in years. For success to continue into future years, advice to groups and clubs on succession planning for committee members will be required.

### **Allotments:**

If this option is implemented, the fees people pay for this positive activity will increase and this may lead to a decrease in the number of people requesting or maintaining allotments.

## **IMPACT ON PARTNERS**

### **Football Pitches:**

Sport England and the FA have welcomed the borough's decision to appoint consultants to carry out the work required to create the playing pitch strategy to meet Sport England's requirements. However, the Tranmere Rovers project is seen as a more pressing priority and has already led to a delay in the steering group meeting process, which has to be in place to meet Sport England's quality requirements. The proposed increase in football pitch letting charges might place pressure on Sport England to see the playing pitch steering group process as a more pressing priority for their attendance than appears to be the case at present.

### **Bowling Clubs:**

Through this potential asset transfer, the continuation of a vibrant bowling community across the borough will be possible. Elderly and mature members of the population will continue to be able to take part in this healthy physical activity and participants will not be at risk of social isolation. This will help avoid increasing the workload of GPs and the NHS.

### **Allotments:**

No direct partner implications. However, continuing a subsidised service, albeit with increased prices, allows people to continue to grow their own produce which positively contributes towards the developing food plan for the borough.

## **IMPACT ON COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY AND FAITH SECTOR**

### **Football Pitches:**

In the medium to long term it might be that less parks have football pitches, if the playing pitch strategy recommends a move to fewer sites with higher investment in facilities, but in the short to medium term the proposal would lead to Wirral's amateur football clubs and amateur leagues needing to take on more of the work required to run and maintain football pitches and pavilions in the borough's parks. A positive implication is that clubs and leagues would be able to take charge of decisions as to whether to carry on playing in poor conditions, rather than feeling frustrated by the council making decisions as to whether games will have to be cancelled due to wet conditions damaging playing surfaces.

#### **Bowling Clubs:**

Clubs may wish to ask for advice from existing voluntary organisations on constitutional or funding issues. Parks Friends groups and Bowls clubs would be taking on additional responsibilities along with opportunities for income generation (use of pavilions for selling teas/ices etc.)

#### **Allotments:**

There would only be an impact where a community or voluntary sector group has taken on an allotment.