

FULL SIZE ALL WEATHER PITCH CHARGES REVIEW

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the current charging position for Argyll & Bute Council's synthetic pitches and makes recommendations to standardise these within the Council's Fees and Charging policies.

1.2 At present, there is no common charging policy for the six full size all-weather pitches as the current charging arrangements have developed historically on an ad-hoc basis related to local circumstances, and require rationalisation in order to ensure equitable charges and access for customers across Argyll and Bute.

1.3 Customer demand highlights a clear preference for the quality of the 3g surfaces over any alternative all weather surface. Whilst full size grass pitches remain popular for matches, the local climate limits the availability of them for training and competitive games.

1.4 The vast majority of use of these pitches is for third size hire for 5 or 7 a side recreational and training purposes. The maximum increase in price for such a let per session would be less than £3, averaging around 30p per user. It is proposed that there be a phased introduction of a common charging policy across the Council area.

1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.6 Members are asked to approve the introduction of a common charging policy for letting of full size all weather pitches.

1.7 Members are asked to approve that letting charges are altered in the phased approach shown Appendix 1.

- 4.4 Charges shown for Dunoon and Rothesay reflect historical charges for blaes sports pitches at the old Dunoon Grammar and Rothesay Academy sites. As the cost of the new pitches was included within the NPDO model for the school in both cases no change in pricing was introduced at the time as there was no direct cost pressure on the service.
- 4.5 In contrast, the charges being applied for Oban, Lochgilphead and Campbeltown reflect current practice and lie within the median charge range across Scotland.
- The Oban pitch was built as a new community facility within the high school grounds and as it was a stand-alone development the local management committee at the time calculated a charging schedule in relation to operational and maintenance requirements for a new facility.
 - The Lochgilphead pricing was linked to the financial model for the NPDO development that included the costs of the replacement for the only Council operated Sports centre in the Council and took account of a nominal per head additional charge levied on all users of the centre.
 - The Campbeltown facility was only opened in Sept 2012 and the price was based on the Lochgilphead overall cost and was seen as a fair charge by SportScotland and the local Community Sports group who were fully involved in the pitch planning and development process.
- 4.6 Accurate benchmark charges for synthetic pitches are difficult to obtain but the undernoted figures in Table 1 provide recent comparisons available for individual authorities.

Table 1

Council	Full Pitch hourly rate
North Ayrshire Council	£31.00
Dundee City Council	£53.00
West Lothian Council	£49.50
Inverclyde Council	£57.00
Midlothian Council	£66.00
West Dumbartonshire Council	£46.24
Borders Council	£75.00
Orkney Council	£38.00
Perthshire Council	£65.63
Clackmannan Council	£60.10

- 4.7 It is recommended that a policy should be introduced to ensure all parts of Argyll and Bute have the same charge for the hire of synthetic pitches. The implementation of charge increases should be undertaken in a phased approach to allow clubs and individuals time to make the necessary financial adjustments in more than one year as shown in Appendix 1.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The current charging practice for all weather pitches is not in accordance with the Council's commitment to provide fair and equal access to similar facilities across all areas of Argyll & Bute. The opening of the Campbeltown pitch in September 2012 ensured that all the major townships in the area now have a full size synthetic pitch. The agreed pricing structure for the pitch was reached on the basis of widespread consultation and benchmarking and created the appropriate opportunity to introduce a common policy across the area. Whilst there will be an increase in costs for the use of some facilities, the new policy which is proposed in this paper will ensure all our customers are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy** The proposal would be an alteration to the current variations in pricing structures for synthetic pitches and introduce a consistent and equitable policy across Argyll and Bute.
- 6.2 Financial** It is anticipated that there will be no reduction in overall income as some prices will increase and some decrease in the short term. The phased introduction will allow customers to plan for any increase in costs.
- 6.3 Personnel** There are no personnel issues.
- 6.4 Equal opportunities** This proposal is consistent with the Council's policy on Equalities
- 6.5 Risk** There is a risk that income may be reduced as some groups or individuals are unwilling to pay the increased charges.
- 6.6 Customer Service** The centralised booking system, inclusion of changing facilities in the core price and equalisation of charges represent improvements in the current service to customers.

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Appendix 1

Full pitch prices per hour

Full Pitch	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Oban	£57.95	£45.00	£45.00	£50.00	£55.00
Aqualibrium	£49.35	£45.00	£45.00	£50.00	£55.00
MASC	£49.35	£45.00	£45.00	£50.00	£55.00
Hermitage	£23.70	£30.00	£38.00	£45.00	£55.00
Dunoon	£15.27	£25.00	£35.00	£45.00	£55.00
Rothesay	£15.27	£25.00	£35.00	£45.00	£55.00

*1/2 pitch will be charged at 60% of the above charges from 15/16

* 1/3 pitch will be charged at 40% of the above charges from 15/16

Third pitch prices per hour

Third Pitch	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Oban	£23.20	£18.00	£18.00	£20.00	£22.00
Aqualibrium	£25.00	£18.00	£18.00	£20.00	£22.00
MASC	£23.70	£18.00	£18.00	£20.00	£22.00
Hermitage	£ 7.90	£12.00	£15.00	£18.00	£22.00
Dunoon	£ 7.60	£10.00	£14.00	£18.00	£22.00
Rothesay	£ 7.60	£10.00	£14.00	£18.00	£22.00

*Current 50% concession charge for under 17's will remain