

CULTURAL SERVICES CHARGES 2008/2009

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider the charges for Cultural Services facilities for the financial year 2009/2010 as set out in the report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Income generation is a key part of the Cultural Services budget forming 23% of its gross budget i.e. £9.1 million, not including contractual ground maintenance for schools and housing areas. In recent years some areas have experienced reductions in income e.g. golf and in others income has remained stable but there has been increased competition from the private sector e.g. fitness suites.

- 2.2 At its meeting of 16 January 2009 Cabinet resolved as part of the resolution for the Strategic Asset Review that; *'officers are asked to investigate the level of current charges to swimming clubs, schools and other organisations across the borough to ensure that the Council Tax Payers are receiving good value for money which should be the subject of a report to Cabinet on 5 February 2009 as part of the budget setting process'*.

3.0 SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICE

- 3.1 Wirral's leisure centres generate £3.4 million income annually of which approximately £1 million is generated by the Invigor8 membership scheme. Launched in June 2004 it is a popular scheme with more than 4,600 members and increasing each year. With the current financial down turn and associated squeeze on people's leisure spend, private fitness suite providers on Wirral seem to be reducing their prices to compete with this scheme. Any increase in Wirral's charge could lead to a significant reduction in the number of members and it is therefore proposed not to increase the monthly Invigor8 membership charge for 2009/10.

3.2 Swimming Club Hire

The projected total annual income from swimming clubs is expected to be £61,506 in 2008/09. Wirral's swimming clubs pay between £27.00 and £31.50 per hour to hire pool time. This is significantly below the natural average of £53.87 for metropolitan areas. If charges were increased to match the national average that would increase income by £50,000 per annum.

3.3 School Curriculum Swimming Instruction

The annual income from pool hire and instructors for schools is £122,250 for 2008/09. Schools purchase pool time in half hour units which includes swimming instruction. In 2008/09 the charge for each half hour was £31.50 and agreement has been reached with the Children and Young People's Department to raise the charge to £35.50 in 2009/10.

- 3.4 **Other Club and Organisational Use**
The present charging policy for sports halls is by space occupied rather than per user. This means that some clubs and other organisations pay a relatively low charge in relation to the number of participants.
- 3.5 A change to the charging policy would take some time to evaluate and it is proposed that members agree to allow officers to investigate further the implications and report back to a further meeting.
- 3.6 In the interim it is proposed that all Sport and Recreation charges are increased by around 3% as set out in Appendix 1.

4.0 CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUMS

- 4.1 Income from cemeteries and crematorium for 2008/09 will be around £2.3M. It is proposed to increase charges in the cemeteries and crematorium service overall by approximately 5%. Charges for some services will remain unchanged but the cost of an adult cremation will increase from £491 to £516 (resident) and from £596 to £626 (non-resident).

5.0 GOLF

- 5.1 Wirral's four golf courses will generate approximately £762,000 in income this year, which is £140,000 less than the estimate although the courses still operate at a surplus.
- 5.2 In recent years there has been a reduction in golf income partially attributable to wet summers but also a reduction in the number of people playing golf. It is proposed that the charge for a round of golf for an adult should rise from £11.60 to £12.00 an increase of 3.49%.

6.0 PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE

- 6.1 **Football and Pitch Hire**
The income from the hire of grass sports pitches is around £58,500 per year. Wirral has generally lower charges than most neighbouring authorities but its pitches have received less investment in drainage and changing facilities. Wirral has 107 winter sports pitches which cost approximately £214,000 to maintain annually. It is proposed to increase the charge by approximately 6% for all pitch hire which would increase the cost of a Class A pitch from around £283 per season to £300 and raise around £3,500 in additional income.
- 6.2 **Allotments**
The income from allotments is approximately £30,000 per annum. The cost of maintaining Wirral's 1,590 allotments in 2008/09 will be £58,650 against a net budget of £40,000. It is proposed to increase the annual rent for an allotment from £29.00 to £31.00 an increase of 6.9% which will result in approximately an additional £2,000 in income.
- 6.3 **Bowling Greens**
The income from bowling greens hire is around £17,500 per annum. Wirral has 46 bowling greens which cost approximately £190,000 per annum to maintain, not including the cost of maintaining pavilions where these are provided. It is proposed to increase the annual charge by approximately 5% which will increase income by £850.

6.4 All other charges for the hire of facilities in the Parks and Countryside Section will increase as shown in Appendix 1.

7.0 LIBRARIES

7.1 Annual income for libraries for the various charges made for audio visual hire, book fines, internet access etc. is around £360,000 per annum. It is proposed that because of the significant changes proposed to the service in 2009/10 no increase is made to any of the charges or income targets for the next financial year.

8.0 PUBLIC HALLS

8.1 The income from public halls is around £242,000 per year. Significant changes are proposed to public halls with some being transferred to community management and others retained as part of multi-purpose centres. It is proposed that charges for public halls are increased by around 3% as shown in Appendix 1 and that a further review is carried out as the future of each facility is clarified.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The annual increases for Cultural Services facilities are intended to maximise the income achieved in each area reducing the net cost of the service provided.

10.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

11.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Concessionary rates are available for elderly persons and juniors and the Wirral Passport Scheme offers a discount to those on a low income.

12.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

13.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

14.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

15.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

16.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

16.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

17.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

17.1 Cultural Services facilities are provided throughout the constituency.

18.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

18.1 None.

19.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

19.1 Cabinet is asked to consider these proposals for increased charges for 2009/10.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Jim Lester who can be contacted on 666 4725