

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

ASTRAL PARK TASK AND FINISH GROUP

TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 1400 HOURS

Present: Councillors R Berry
 D Bowater (substituting for A Dodwell)
 S Jones – in the Chair
 V Harvey

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
 I Haynes (Head of Grounds & Environmental
 Services)
 S Sandiford (Head of Democratic & Central
 Services)

Members of the Public: 0
Members of the Press: 0

11/AP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor A Dodwell (substituted by Councillor D Bowater).

12/AP DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were asked to declare any interests, including the nature of those interests, which they had in any of the items under consideration at this meeting. No declarations were made.

13/AP MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Task and Finish group received the draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2019.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Astral Park Task and Finish group meetings held on 11 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

14/AP FEES AND CHARGES FROM 1 APRIL 2020

Further to the discussion held on 11 November 2019 regarding fees and charges, the Task and Finish Group received for consideration proposals for the three pavilion buildings to take effect from 1 April 2020.

For both Mentmore Park Pavilion and Pages Park Pavilion, the usual formula (agreed by Committee) of applying the September RPI, rounded up to the nearest 50 pence, had been applied to proposed new fees. The RPI for September 2019 was 2.4%.

Although the newly refurbished pavilion at Pages Park was the larger facility of the two, it had previously been discussed that no further increase in fees would be applied, until such time as the car parking and external lighting had been improved.

Following its refurbishment, Pages Park Pavilion would now be a VAT-able asset with VAT charged to hirers.

Significant discussion had taken place at the previous meeting regarding fees and charges for Astral Park. Current fees were complex, dependant upon not only the type of use but also the configuration of the hall. Going forward, it was proposed that fees be standardised and apply for the whole hall only. The only difference in rates would be to offer an off-peak discount across all three buildings to try to maximise use during the quieter afternoon periods (1pm – 4pm Monday to Friday).

Some financial modelling had been undertaken for all three facilities based on a number of assumptions regarding hires. These assumptions were based on data compiled during 2017 and 2018 and were therefore deemed to be realistic and achievable. Based on these assumptions and the proposed new fees, income targets for 2020-21 as set out in the draft budget would be met.

Proposed fees had been compared to current fees for other facilities within the local area and were felt to be appropriate and to offer a clear subsidy to the community.

RECOMMENDED to the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee to approve the following proposed fees and charges from 1 April 2020:

**Pages Park Pavilion £18.00 per hour (currently £17.50)
£12.00 per hour off-peak (Mon-Fri 1pm-4pm)
Play Café £18.00 per session**

**Mentmore Park Pavilion £18.50 per hour (currently £18.00)
£12.00 per hour off-peak (Mon-Fri 1pm-4pm)
Mentmore Under Fives £18.50 per session**

**Astral Park Sports & £28.00 per hour
Community Centre (currently varied rates £25-£45 per hour)
£18.50 per hour off-peak (Mon-Fri 1pm-4pm)**

Discussion took place regarding how best to support start-up community groups, charitable organisations and other not-for-profit organisations, whilst not disenfranchising commercial hirers who, whilst generating income, were also providing activities for the community which were enhancing residents' wellbeing. This was recognised to be a very difficult balance to achieve but that mechanisms were in place to provide support, such as the Start-Up Grants available through the General Grants scheme.

It was proposed that not-for-profit organisations (not just registered charities) could apply for a subsidised rate of 50% discount when booking Town Council facilities, at **either** the standard rate or the already discounted off-peak rate. This would need to be managed in order to balance income with subsidised community use.

RECOMMENDED to the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee to endorse the following guidelines, which would allow not-for-profit groups to apply for discounted fees on pavilion hire:

*Organisations/groups which are not-for-profit may apply for a discount of 50% on **either standard rates or the discounted off-peak rate**, subject to the following:*

- *The group must be comprised mainly of Leighton-Linslade residents*
- *The group must be a not for profit organisation*
- *The group must be able to demonstrate a clear community benefit*
- *Each group may have a maximum of one discounted session per week, other than in exceptional circumstances*
- *A maximum of 2 discounted bookings **per week, per facility** will be permitted **outside of the specified off-peak sessions (1pm-4pm weekdays) which are unlimited.***
- *Bookings are subject to availability and on a first come, first served basis.*
- *The council reserves the right to cancel future bookings if the group breaches hire terms and conditions.*

Outside of the above, the Town Council would actively encourage approaches from the community offering new, start-up services or activities which would be of clear community benefit and would consider how best to support such groups/activities on a case-by-case basis, seeking Committee approval where deemed necessary.

The point was raised that there was a perception that bookings might be cancelled by the Town Council. It was noted that occasional cancellations were unavoidable for a variety of reasons but the Town Council would always give as much notice as possible and seek to offer alternatives where available. It was noted that terms and conditions of hire needed to be harmonised across the three facilities and that this work was underway.

The Task and Finish Group discussed how best to encourage maximum use of the facilities, including community use. It was noted that the amount of £6,571 had been earmarked in the new structure for promotional/marketing activity and suggested that this funding could potentially be used in a more creative manner, for community facilitating, possibly in partnership with another organisation. Such community facilitating could fit in with the aspirations of the Council's Volunteer Policy and Five-Year Plan.

The Task and Finish Group also noted that the fees and charges applied to White House room hire were high. This was a legacy arrangement dating back some years.

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Finance Committee:

- (i) To consider the fees and charges relating to use of the White House from 1 April 2020.**
- (ii) To consider whether the £6,571 earmarked for promotion/marketing of the Town Council facilities could be used in a more creative manner for community facilitating in some form.**

The Chair noted that the work of the Task and Finish Group was now completed and thanked all Members who had participated in this significant piece of work.

The meeting closed at 15:10 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2019.

Chair

2 DECEMBER 2019.