

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

FEES AND CHARGES FOR EVENTS IN PARKS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To propose the introduction of fees and charges for events in parks and open spaces.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Fees and charges have always been levied by the Council for the formal sporting use of open space such as football, rugby etc. The charges are based on the cost of maintaining the facility in an appropriate condition to ensure the use can continue. The use of open spaces for entertainment such as circuses has in the past been arranged through the Estates section.
- 2.2 Fairgrounds have historically not been allowed onto City Council land due to perceived neighbourhood nuisance issues, but were allowed onto Devon County Council land. Recent trials have shown that despite limited objections such events have a positive effect on increasing the legitimate use of parks and open spaces. The availability of land for such events, which requires an area at least similar to that of the average football pitch, has become very limited in recent years.
- 2.3 Many other Local Authorities charge fees for the use of public open spaces for a wide range of events and actively promote their use. Research has shown there is considerable variance in the fees charged.
- 2.4 The Health and Safety Executive provide a range of publications for guidance on the management of events, but it is clear from these that they see the landowner has a significant responsibility in ensuring any event is managed safely. In order to exercise the correct degree of control over events a short term post of Parks Events and Promotions Officer has been approved for three years. The remit of this postholder includes the active encouragement of a range of events from small scale events such as those held by playgroups to larger scale concerts in parks and open spaces.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 In order to ensure the Council is not at a financial disadvantage when hosting commercial (for profit) events, a sliding scale of fees is being proposed to both cover the Council's costs involved in staging and vetting the suitability of external events for parks and open space. This will include carrying out any subsequent remedial works that to date have been absorbed within current budgets. Any income remaining will be used to subsidise additional community events which will further support legitimate use of parks and open spaces.
- 3.2 Research amongst other authorities showed a wide range of approaches and levels of charges. This research has informed the proposal which is outlined in Appendix I. The figures are based on the average of fees charged by others, moderated by the fact there is not an established market in Exeter. The fees would be reviewed annually alongside other fees and charges.

- 3.3 To ensure fees reflect the likely costs to the Council, and match the duration of the event, the charging system proposed is based on a set-up fee, followed by a daily fee
- 3.4 To avoid disadvantaging small community events and charitable events it is proposed they will pay only a deposit, refundable subject to the event remaining within the size stated and no unreasonable damage is caused during the event. The charges proposed for larger community and charitable events reflect the additional organisational work and on-site liaison that is usually required, but is still less than those for a commercial event.
- 3.5 It is recognised that there will be occasions where events, most usually community based, which the Council would wish to actively support. In such cases applications to waive or subsidise any fees can be made by the sponsoring service. Decisions would lie with the Head of Contracts & Direct Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Leisure.
- 3.6 Running alongside this proposal a thorough review of documentation has been completed which will result in a suite of application forms designed to assist and simplify the process particularly for smaller organisations seeking to make use of spaces.
- 3.7 Members should note the as part of the process appropriate consultation with the police, Council health and safety and environmental protection staff and of course ward councillors will take place to ensure any concerns are addressed as far as possible before an event is approved. Where events are significant in size or impact every effort will be made to seek the views of local people.
- 3.8 There will also be a post event review process that will identify issues so as to continually improve the process.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The introduction of a clear scale of fees of charges will:

- Provide clarity to potential users of parks and open spaces for events
- Encourage the increased legitimate use of parks and open spaces particularly for small community and charitable events.
- Cover the costs to the council for staging such events which are currently absorbed within existing budgets.

5. RECOMMENDED

that Scrutiny Committee - Community:

- 1) agree the principle of charging for external events on open spaces; and
- 2) give their views on the proposed charges for introduction in 2008/9.

HEAD OF CONTRACTS AND DIRECT SERVICES

S:LP/Committee/907SCC14
23.8..07

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

Appendix I

Events on Open Spaces

Fees are calculated to cover costs occurred in managing events on Council land. Other terms and conditions will apply eg specific insurance cover. Fees for long running events by negotiation

	Fee £ p	VAT £ p	Total £ p	VAT Code
<u>Commercial events</u>				
Large circus/funfair (more than 200 seated/5 rides)				
Set -up	170.21	29.79	200.00	
Rate per day	340.43	59.57	400.00	
Small circus/funfair (less than 200 seated/5 rides)				
Set -up	127.66	22.34	150.00	
Rate per day	255.32	44.68	300.00	
Major event (in excess of 2000 persons attending)				
Set -up	212.77	37.23	250.00	
Rate per day	425.53	74.47	500.00	
Minor event (less than 2000 persons attending)				
Set -up	85.11	14.89	100.00	
Rate per day	212.77	37.23	250.00	
<u>Community events</u>				
Large event (in excess of 1000 persons attending)				
Set -up	170.21	29.79	200.00	
Rate per day	340.43	59.57	400.00	
Medium event (500 to 1000 persons attending)				
Rate per day	85.11	14.89	100.00	
Small event (less than 500 persons attending)				
Refundable deposit (held against reinstatement costs)	85.11	14.89	100.00	
<u>Charitable events</u>				
Large events (in excess of 1000 persons attending)				
Set -up	85.11	14.89	100.00	
Refundable deposit (held against reinstatement costs)	85.11	14.89	100.00	
Small events (less than 1000 persons attending)				
Refundable deposit (held against reinstatement costs)	85.11	14.89	100.00	