


King George's Field Trust Board Meeting 13 March 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Simon Baxter, Corporate Director, Communities	Classification: [Unrestricted]
Fees and Charges Review Report, King George's Fields Trust (KGFT)	

Lead Member	Cllr Iqbal Hossain, Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation
Originating Officer(s)	Catherine Boyd, Head of Arts Parks and Events
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Forward Plan Notice Published	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	N/A

Executive Summary

This report provides an update of a review by the Council's Arts, Parks and Events of fees and charges for the hire of assets owned by King George's Field (Mile End) charity.

The report provides an overview of the benchmarking carried out by officers and proposed options for new fees and charges for the hire of the Art and Ecology Pavilions and Stepney Green astroturf facility.

Recommendations:

The Board is recommended to:

1. Review and approve the proposed hire charge increases for the Art and Ecology Pavilions from 1 April 2024 and authorise the Corporate Director of Communities and Director of Finance to implement the new charges. (Appendix 1)
2. Review and approve the proposed hire charge increase for the Stepney Green astroturf from 1 April 2024 and authorise the Corporate Director of

Communities and Director of Finance to implement the new charges.
(Appendix 2)

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 There are two King George's Fields charities, both of which are registered with the Charity Commission: (1) The King George's Field, Mile End charity, registered number 1077859 ("the Mile End charity"); and (2) the King George's Field – Stepney (Tredegar Square, Bow) charity, registered number 1088999 ("the Tredegar Square charity"). The Council is the sole trustee of both charities.
- 1.2 On 28 February 2000, the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales ordered under the Charities Act 1993 that the charity known as King George's Field, Mile End, at Stepney in the London borough of Tower Hamlets be administered according to a specified scheme ("the 2000 Scheme").
- 1.3 Under the 2000 Scheme, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets ("the Council") is the trustee of the charity. The Council is empowered to delegate its trustee function to a committee consisting of any two or more members, provided that the Council exercises reasonable supervision over the committee. The committee must "promptly" report their acts and proceedings to the Council.
- 1.4 The Council is the trustee of the charity and holds the land in trust for the charity.
- 1.5 The King George's Field Charity Board (the Board) is established by section 3.3.12 of the Council's Constitution, which gives the Board the following functions:
 - 3.2.1 To administer the affairs of the King George's Field Charity and discharge all the duties of the Council a sole trustee of the Charity
 - 3.2.2 To administer the affairs and discharge the duties of trustee of such other charities controlled by the Council as the Cabinet might authorise by resolution
- 1.6 The Council is to keep the Park Lands in perpetuity as a memorial to King George V and may use the land.
 - 3.8.1. For playing fields named and sign posted as "King George's Fields".
 - 3.8.2. For facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation, provided that it is in the interests of social welfare and for the public benefit.
- 1.7 The principal purpose of the Mile End charity is to maintain the Park Lands in perpetuity as playing fields for the use and enjoyment of the public.
- 1.8 Stepney Green Park astroturf and the Art and Ecology Pavilions are part of the KGFT estate. Therefore, the KGFT Board is required to approve any increases to hire charges.

- 1.9 Due to increased costs for maintaining and operating the pavilions at Mile End at astroturf at Stepney Green Park, it is recommended that the Board increases hire charges. (**Appendices 1 and 2**)
- 1.10 Increases to hire charges are being proposed, in line with the Council's fees and charges review. If approved by the Board, the increased hire charges would be applied to bookings from 1 April 2024. The level of inflation were the key factors in determining the recommended changes. Other factors such as demand, the projected cost of providing the different services, benchmarking with other local authorities and the impact of general economic factors including cost of living on residents and users have been considered.
- 1.11 At the Council's 3 January 2024 [Cabinet](#) meeting, hire charges for all sports facilities in the borough were approved, which included the astroturf pitch at Stepney Green. In addition, the increase to hire charges requires approval by the KGFT Board.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Not take forward the recommendations to increase hire costs and reduce the Charity's ability to generate sufficient income to cover the maintenance and running costs of the Mile End Park Pavilions and astroturf at Stepney Green astroturf.
- 2.2 Failure to generate sufficient income could result in the assets not being properly maintained and invested in and in the Charity needing to use reserves to meet any income shortfall.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Mile End Park Art and Ecology Pavilions

- 3.1 The Art and Ecology pavilions are located in Mile End Park, which forms part of the KGFT estate. The Art and Ecology Pavilions supports the Charity's objectives through the provision of free to enter art exhibitions and community events. In addition, the pavilions are hired by private, commercial and corporate clients, which helps to generate income for the Charity.
- 3.2 The revised proposed charges are provided in Tables 1 and 2 in **Appendix 1**. **Appendix 1** also provides details on the benchmarking carried out by officers. From the benchmarking carried, the proposed increased rates would still make the pavilions competitive compared to other similar venues. If approved by the Board, the increased hire charges would be applied to new bookings from 1 April 2024.

- 3.3 A new “Corporate” booking rate for Tower Hamlets based charities or not-for-profit organisations (including Community Interest Companies and Council bookings) that are using the venues for conferences/events that are not open to the public and therefore are not able to apply for the community subsidised hire rate is recommended. Examples of this may include bookings by the NHS or educational institutions. This new proposed category will enable the charity to increase bookings during less booked periods. This rate is proposed for Mondays to Wednesdays only (9am to 6pm), excluding bank holidays, which is a lower demand period. This rate does not include staffing or technical support (including equipment).

Stepney Green Park Astroturf

- 3.4 The astroturf at Stepney Green Park is used by a range of local teams, schools, youth and community groups as well as private hirers.
- 3.5 The Charity has kept the hire charges for the astroturf pitch below market level to enable more of the borough’s residents to be able to benefit from access to a high quality astroturf provision and to support health and wellbeing agendas.
- 3.6 The pitch at Stepney Green is a third-generation pitch and was built in 2015. The pitch comprises of a full 11-a-side pitch that can be split into three and five a side pitches. The changing rooms were refurbished in May 2020 and the external pitch lighting was upgraded to LED in September 2021.
- 3.7 The Stepney Green astroturf was developed with a grant of £451,180 from Premier League and Football Association Facilities Fund grants administered by the Football Foundation and awarded on 31 May 2013. Pending approval by the KGFT Board, the revised pitch hire fees and community use need to be in accordance with the grant conditions and community use needs to be considered.
- 3.8 Please refer to **Appendix 2** for further details on benchmarking carried out by officers and for more information on the charging structure for astroturf at Stepney Green Park including the proposed increases.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The King George’s Fields Trust manages lands and facilities which are open to all. Where charges have to be made, such as artificial football pitches, charges are kept at affordable levels for the local community.
- 4.2 The pavilions have a wide range of bookings that are of wider benefit to the community that include supporting the NHS’s response to the pandemic, blood donor banks, food bank distribution, free-to-access art exhibitions and workshops.

- 4.3 The income generated from the Charity's assets help to support the upkeep of the facilities with any profit going back into the maintaining and improving of Mile End Park and Stepney Green Park.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no further statutory implications applicable to this report.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 The report is seeking approval of a revised fees and charge schedule for the hire of assets owned by King George's Field (Mile End) charity. Details of the charges are contained in Appendices to this report.
- 6.2 The King George's Field Trust charity is self-financing and does not receive any contribution from the Council's General fund. The trust is experiencing cost increases in maintaining and running its assets and therefore its income streams will need to increase to meet these additional costs and ensure there is no financial impact on the Council. The recommended changes in fees and charges are in line with inflation and with other areas of the council and also compare favourably with similar facilities shown through benchmarking exercises. The revised fees and charges would be expected to ensure the trust's continued self-sufficiency.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is the corporate trustee of the King George's Fields Trust ("the Charity"). Decisions of the Council as trustee are made by the King George's Field Trust Board. When Councillors are sitting as Board members they must act in the Charity's best interests and manage the Charity's income and resources responsibly and ensure that the Charity complies with its legal obligations.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- [3 January 2024 Cabinet meeting](#)

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Pavilion Hire Rate Review
- Appendix 2 – Stepney Green Astro turf Hire Rates Review

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

Catherine Boyd, Head of Arts Parks and Events