

King George's Field Trust Board Meeting 22 March 2023	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: James Thomas, Corporate Director Children and Culture	Classification: [Unrestricted]
Fees and Charges Review Report, King George's Field 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 astro turf facility. It also includes a review of the subsidised community usage for the pavilions.

Recommendations:

The Board is recommended to:

1. Review and approve the proposed hire charge increases for the Art and Ecology Pavilions from 1 April 2023 and authorise the Corporate Director of Children and Culture and Director of Finance to implement the new charges. (Appendix 1)
2. Review the "Subsidised Hire of Pavilions for Community Groups", agreed by the Board on 6 March 2018. Approve an updated policy and authorise the

Corporate Director of Children and Culture to implement this revised policy from 1 April 2023. (Appendix 2)

3. Review and approve the proposed hire charge increase for the Stepney Green astroturf from 1 April 2023 and authorise the Corporate Director of Children and Culture and Director of Finance to implement the new charges. (Appendix 3)
4. Note, and have regard to, the Charity Commission's Public Benefit Guidance (Appendix 4)

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 3**)
- 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 2023. The level of inflation (CPI 9.0% & RPI 11.1% in April 2022) 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 COVID-19 and cost of living on residents and users have been considered.
- 1.11 At the Council's 4 January 2023 [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.
- 1.12 In March 2018 a policy for subsidised hire rates for community groups was approved by the KGFT board. (**Appendix 2**)
- 1.13 Since the subsidised hire policy was agreed the Charity's financial position has been adversely impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition, there has been a significant increase in maintenance costs and running costs as a result of rising inflation, utility and staffing costs. Therefore, a review of the subsidised hire policy is recommended to protect the ongoing viability of the venues and to support the KGFT's revenue streams and delivery of its charitable objectives.

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 Not revise the subsidised hire policy, resulting in additional financial pressure being placed on the Charity.
- 2.3 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 2023.

Community Rates Review

- 3.3 As part of this review, it is recommended that the community free and subsidised hire rates policy is reviewed to ensure greater clarity and transparency and to enable the Charity to fulfil its objectives.
- 3.4 The current policy is broad and allows for discounts ranging from 50% through to free use of the Pavilions for up to 20 bookings per annum. In addition, the policy allows the Friends of Mile End Park to have up to six free bookings per annum. Free usage currently includes all staffing costs being covered by the Charity.
- 3.5 It is proposed that the policy is revised to offer a discount for up to 20 bookings per annum from 50% to up to 80% on the hire rate with all applicants required to pay the balance of the hire fee (after the discount has been applied) and for any additional staffing, cleaning and equipment costs associated with the hire.
- 3.6 It is proposed that the Friends Group for Mile End Park continue to be supported under the current policy (i.e., six days free use per annum). However, it is proposed that the revised policy makes clarifies that these days are restricted for use by the Friends Group and are non-transferable to a third party. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Friends Group of Mile End Park are charged for any staffing costs for use of the pavilions outside of the core hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) and for any additional oncosts such as security and equipment hire (if applicable).
- 3.7 Please see **Appendix 2**, which shows the current policy and a proposed revised policy for consideration by the Board.

Stepney Green Park Astroturf

- 3.8 The astroturf at Stepney Green Park is used by a range of local teams, schools, youth and community groups as well as private hirers.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 Please refer to **Appendix 3** 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 Field 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 In line with the Charity's community hire policy (**Appendix 2**), provision is made for local organisations (that meet the criteria) to benefit from a reduced hire charge for use of the Art an Ecology Pavilion.
- 4.3 The pavilions have a wide range of bookings that are of wider benefit to the community that have include supporting the NHS's response to the pandemic, blood donor banks, food bank distribution, free to access art exhibitions and workshops.
- 4.4 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 King George Fields trust Charity is self-financing and does not have any contribution from the Councils General fund. As costs increase for the trust fees and charges would need to be increased to continue to cover costs and ensure there is no financial impact to 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 the benchmarking exercise. The revised fees and charges would be expected to ensure the trusts 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 Field Trust ("the Charity"). Decisions of the Council as trustee are made by the King George 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

- [6 March 2018 King George's Fields Trust Community Subsidised Hire Rate review](#)
- [4 January 2023 Cabinet meeting](#)

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Art and Ecology Pavilion Hire Rate Review
- Appendix 2 – Community Subsidised Hire Rate Review
- Appendix 3 – Stepney Green Astro turf Hire Rate Review
- Appendix 4 – Public Benefit Guidance

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