

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member and Advisers for Business Growth and Regeneration</b>
2.	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015</b>
3.	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Leisure and Green Spaces Fees and Charges 2015/16 and Allotment Rents 2015/16 and 2016/17</b>
4.	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Environment and Development Services</b>

### 5. Summary

The report outlines proposed changes to Leisure and Green Spaces fees and charges, and allotment rents.

### 6. Recommendations

**6.1 That the Leisure and Green Spaces fees and charges set out in Appendices A and B be approved.**

**6.2 That the allotment rents and charges set out in Appendix C be approved**

### 7. Proposals and Details

Generally, proposed fees and charges have been increased by at least the rate of inflation. Where this is not the case, it is either because implementing a price increase would incur additional costs (e.g. for changing ticket machines) or because managers feel that a unit price increase would reduce income due to its impact on levels of business.

Proposed allotment rents are also presented in this report. Allotment rents and charges for 2015/16 were previously approved by Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism in January 2014. Since then, they have been subject to further review taking into account the requirements of section 10 of the Allotments Act 1950, and the projected service income and costs in 2015/16. Consequently, it is now recommended that rents and most charges for allotments in 2015/16 be set at a lower level than previously agreed. Recommended allotment rents and charges for 2016/17 are also presented for approval.

The Allotments Act 1950 (section 10) provides that allotment rents should be:

*“such rent as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land if let for such use on the terms (other than terms as to rent) on which it is in fact let”.*

In *Leeds and District Allotment Gardeners Federation v Leeds City Council* (2014) Judge Behrens found that:

*“...section 10 of the 1950 Act does not prescribe any method for the determination of a rent that a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land... The most usual way of doing this would be to look at the rents charged by other Councils which had also been fixed under the same statutory formula.”*

Rotherham Council’s Principal Value has confirmed that comparison with rents charged in other districts is a sound basis for arriving at a reasonable rent for allotment plots.

The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) conducted a survey of allotment rents in autumn 2014. Of 36 councils that responded only 9, including Rotherham, set a rent that excludes water supply costs. As this is a relatively small sample, comparable rents for a further seven districts in the North and Midlands were taken from council web sites. Amongst these 16 districts, rents charged for a 250m<sup>2</sup> plot in 2014/15 range from £24 to £105, with Rotherham’s rent ranked ninth lowest at £48, as shown in Figure 1.

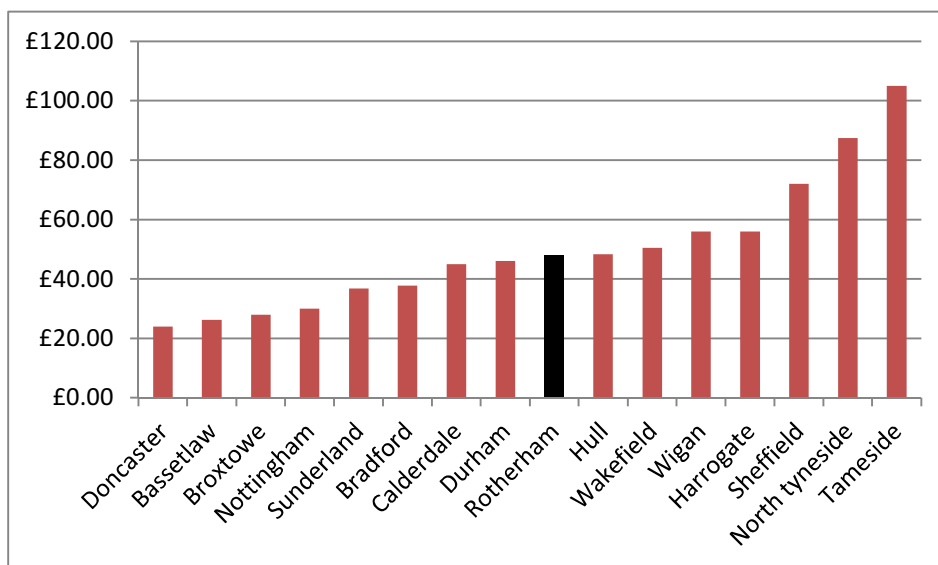


Figure 1. 2014/15 Rent Charged for 250m<sup>2</sup> plot

This suggests that current rents in Rotherham are well within the range of rents applied in other parts of the country. Unfortunately, similar comparison data is not available for future years. However, recommended rents for 2015/16 and 2016/17 would still be within the 2014/15 range, at £51.50 and £56.75 respectively for a 250 m<sup>2</sup> plot.

The proposed rents are projected to generate sufficient funds, along with an expected subsidy of around 15% in 2015/16 and 10% in 2016/17, to sustain existing levels of allotment provision and modest improvements on sites where they are most needed. It is believed that the proposed rent increase will not have a significant impact on uptake of allotments. This is based on the fact that demand for allotments remains high, with 113 people on waiting lists at the time of writing, and the proposed rent increase amounting to just 7 pence per week for a directly let 250m<sup>2</sup> plot in 2015/16, and 10 pence per week in 2016/17. At 99 pence per week for a 250m<sup>2</sup> plot in 2015/16, the cost of renting an allotment compares favourably with equivalent proposed costs of other leisure activities, as shown below.

- Bowls season ticket (£2.88 per week)
- Concessionary bowls season ticket (£1 per week)
- Pitch hire (£49.90 to £65.45 per fixture)
- Tennis season ticket (£3.45/ concession £2.24 per visit)
- Cycle hire at country park (£6.00/ concession £5.00 per hour)
- Course fishing season ticket (£1.35/ concession £0.91 per week)

Most proposed fees and charges would take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. However, the proposed charges for water-sports at Rother Valley Country Park would start on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015, as this is when the service re-starts for the 2015 season.

## **8. Finance**

The proposed increases are designed to generate the levels of income required to operate services within available budgets. The impact of the charges will be closely monitored to ensure that income targets are being reached and that prices are reviewed throughout the year as demand dictates.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

Any cost increase can have an adverse impact on levels of business, and this can make it difficult to meet income targets. Service Managers will continue to monitor usage and customer feedback as appropriate, and take this into consideration in future reviews of fees and charges.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda**

**Sustainability:** The proposals outlined will make a contribution to the financial sustainability of the service.

**Corporate Priorities:** The services provided meet the Council priorities of helping people to improve their health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities within the borough

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

The fees, charges and rents have been developed in consultation with Service Managers across Leisure and Green Spaces. Colleagues in Financial Services, Asset Management and Legal Services have also been consulted.

Appendix A – Front Sheet

Appendix B - Leisure and Green Spaces Fees and Charges 2015/16

Appendix C – Allotment Rents and Charges 2015/16 and 2016/17

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**LEISURE AND GREEN SPACES**

**SCHEDULE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

**2015-16**

Charges are for non-profit making bodies based in Rotherham Metropolitan Borough and individuals only. Organisations may apply for concessionary use subject to completion of an application form which includes details of the criteria that are used in considering such applications.

Commercial fees and charges where stated on application.

All charges will be rounded up to the full hour (except where stated).

All charges are exclusive of VAT except where indicated (\*) where price includes VAT.

All charges are subject to any changes in VAT Regulations.

Individuals eligible for the concessionary rate are as follows:

\* Individuals who are holders of Rothercard (for individual services – e.g. tickets, equipment hire, etc., not on behalf of an organisation), juniors (under 16 years of age), persons aged 60 years and above.

\* Carers/Personal Assistants accompanying people with special needs to sports facilities/activities will be entitled to free admission (check with facility for details of eligibility).