

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Decision Made: 3 April 2009

Review of Fees and Charges for Hotfoot 2009-2010

Issue for Decision

To consider setting the level of fees and charges for Hotfoot play schemes for 2009-2010.

Decision Made

That the proposed charges for the Hotfoot play schemes as shown in Appendix A of the Report of the Assistant Director for Customer Services and Partnerships be agreed.

Reasons for Decision

It is Council policy to review the fees and charges annually to ensure that income targets and budget strategy savings are met.

In addition, charges are reviewed against those of neighbouring authorities to test market tolerance.

Comparative fees (see Appendix B of the Report of the Assistant Director for Customer Services and Partnerships) show:-

- i. Standard weekly rates for 1 or 2 children are £5 per child less than TMBC.
- ii. The discounted rates are more expensive, as Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) operate a heavily subsidised 'Leisure Pass scheme' which enables those on benefits to receive a significant discounted rate of £8.00 per week, compared to £15.00 per week for Hotfoot).
- iii. In Summer 2008 a fund was established from contributions from a number of members delegated budgets and KCC Children's Social Services to provide free places for families in need. This has proved very successful and although the funding is not definite year on year, KCC Social Services and a number of members have confirmed funding for both schemes again in 2009-2010 financial year. These schemes help to provide an inclusive scheme for families regardless of income. The number of families able to benefit from the referrals is dependent on the level of funding made available by Councillors and KCC Social Services respectively.
- iv. Standard daily rate on Hotfoot is £1.00 per day less than TMBC
- v. Discounted daily rate on Hotfoot is 50p per day higher than TMBC

In prior years income targets have not been achieved as it has proved difficult to generate increased take up. Expenditure levels are fixed in relation to site hire costs and the ratio of staff to children. Assuming the 2009/10 season attracts participation rates that are similar to the 2008/09 season, the recommended increase in fees will enable the service to achieve its income targets and reduce its variance from budget. The effect on participants has been factored into the calculation of new prices.

The comparison with fees at TMBC suggests that the Hotfoot scheme in Maidstone has been undervalued in previous years. To correct this and achieve satisfactory performance against budgeted income requires a higher than inflation increase in fees, that averages 21%. Although a high percentage, this increase is low in value at a maximum of £4.70 per child per week.

Alternative actions and why rejected

The alternative course of action would be not to increase the charges, or to increase them by a smaller amount. However, this would mean that income targets would not be met for 2009-10. Expenditure budgets could not be reduced to resolve this shortfall as they remain fixed in relation to the number of participants.

Background Papers

None

Background documents can be viewed at the Council Offices

Signed
Councillor Marion Ring
Cabinet Member for Community Services

Date:
3 April 2009

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Scrutiny Manager by: **14 April 2009**