

MBC Outdoor Sports Facilities Booking Process

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage Culture and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	William Cornall Director of Regeneration & Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Dawn Hudd Head of Regeneration & Economic Development
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the process for the booking of council sports pitches.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. This report is to note.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee	3 July 2018

MBC Outdoor Sports Facilities Booking Process

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Background

1.1 Maidstone Borough Council has outdoor sports pitches in some of its parks and open spaces. Currently there are 22 Junior Football pitches of various sizes depending on age, 7 Senior Football Pitches, 3 Rugby Pitches and recently we have installed American Football pitches at Shepway Green. The number of pitches prepared and available can be changed depending on need.

Current pitch booking process

1.2 The current process for booking MBC pitches is as follows:

1.3 In June each year all sports teams that hired pitches during the previous season, or have expressed interest in doing so for the new season are contacted by MBC regarding their requirements for the coming season. Teams replying that they wish to hire are then sent an application to hire form and a copy of the conditions of hire. Any new teams are also set up with an account with Serco (the operators of Maidstone Leisure Centre (MLC)), who manage the collection of funds and weekly booking of pitches.

1.4 Teams who hired pitches the previous season are given first refusal for the same pitch for the forthcoming season.

1.5 Teams are given until mid-July to respond, when they will be issued a contract letter by MBC which advises of hire process and costs.

1.6 Teams then book pitches for their fixtures for and during the season with MLC, this service is provided as part of their contract. Most teams request to take the block booking option which is VAT exempt. Teams are invoiced over the course of the season and must play a minimum of ten home games. If they do not play 10 games at home they will still be charged for 10 in order to avoid paying VAT. If more than 10 games are played then these will be invoiced at the end of the season.

1.7 The weekly pitch allocation is produced by MLC and is passed on to the MBC Grounds Maintenance Team who prepare the pitches as per the booking sheet.

1.8 MLC will invoice teams twice over the course of the season. MBC will then invoice MLC for this income when received from the clubs.

1.9 If any issues occur i.e. invoices not being paid or changing rooms left in a state these are addressed by MBC with the teams directly.

1.10 Hirers wishing to book a single pitch can contact Maidstone Leisure Centre direct to book and pay for the pitches.

Maintenance and Condition of Pitches

1.11 All MBC pitches in the borough are maintained by MBC. This includes line marking. Clubs supply and install their own goal nets.

Pitch Charges

1.12 Fees and Charges for sports pitches are agreed by council along with all other fees and charges every year. The charges are regularly benchmarked against other pitch providers and as well as this officers through discussion with the football leagues get an indication as to what an appropriate level is. Because of this there has not been an increase in the charge for MBC Football and Rugby Pitches since 2012.

1.13 The current prices for football pitches are as follows:

Pitch/Changing Rooms	Prices Including VAT Single Match	10 or more matches
Junior Pitch	£22.80	£19
Senior Pitch	£57.60	£48
Changing Rooms and Showers (where available)	£16.80	£16.80

1.14 The current prices for rugby are as follows:

Pitch/Changing Rooms	Price including VAT Single Match	10 or more matches
Junior Pitch	£30.50	£25.40
Senior Pitch	£60.50	£50.40
Changing rooms and showers	£16.80	£16.80

1.15 Some MBC sites also have changing rooms and showers, although the demand for these are very limited as juniors clubs no longer use changing rooms.

Cancellation of pitches

1.16 Currently clubs cannot cancel a pitch after the Wednesday before a fixture. The reason for this is that MBC will have had to pay for the pitch to be

prepared.

- 1.17 If MBC has to cancel a game as the pitch is not playable a message will be left on the answer phone which all clubs can access. Unfortunately clubs often choose to ignore the answer phone and play pitches when they are too wet which causes damage and reduces quality further.

MBC Resources

- 1.18 Up until July 2011 MBC employed a Sports Bookings Assistant who dealt with all matters relating to sports bookings including dealing with clubs, contracts, taking weekly bookings and charging clubs.
- 1.19 After this time in order to enable the sports bookings to continue MLC was approached, and agreed, to take on the weekly booking and charging to sports clubs. Until now MLC have charged MBC to carry out this work at a cost of £5,562 per annum, we are currently working with them on a contract amendment which will make this service a contractual obligation.
- 1.20 At this time the Leisure Monitoring Officer took on the role of liaising with Clubs at the start of the season, issuing of contracts and overseeing how the Leisure Centre were managing the sports bookings process.
- 1.21 In December 2016, the Leisure Monitoring Officer left MBC and the post was moved to the Commissioning and Business Improvement Team. The part of the role that dealt with sports pitch bookings did not transfer as it was unrelated to the contract monitoring role. Since this time there has been very little resource left to deal with sports pitch bookings and this has been dealt with on an ad-hoc basis.
- 1.22 The reduction in resource to deal with sports booking has had an impact on the level of service that sports clubs have received.
- 1.23 It is proposed that the liaison with the sports clubs and the annual contact with them regarding seasonal bookings will sit entirely to MLC. This will provide a clearer line of responsibility and a clearer and easier process for the customer. Any queries or complaints can then be dealt with at source. We are currently working with MLC to finalise these arrangements.

Playing Pitch Strategy

- 1.24 As part of the work being carried out for the local plan a Playing Pitch Strategy is currently being produced by the Strategic Planning Team. This will identify the type, number and quality of playing pitches that will be required up until 2031 to accommodate the additional houses that are being built in the borough. A report will be brought to HCLC in due course.
- 1.25 This strategy should provide the opportunity and funding for improvements in the number and quality of pitches going forward.
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2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

2.1 This report is to note only.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 This report is to note only.

4. RISK

4.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 None.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 The final arrangements with MLC will be agreed and the clubs notified of the new process.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of its aims to provide good leisure and cultural attractions and to encourage health and wellbeing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section of this report	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within	Head of Regeneration

	already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	and Economic Development
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Legal	N/A	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Privacy and Data Protection	Any data collected will be processed in accordance with the appropriate data protection legislation.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Equalities	There are no impacts identified, however it is important to communicate our policies widely to ensure access to services especially for hard to reach groups.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Crime and Disorder	N/A	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Procurement	N/A	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- None
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None