

Boscawen Park Tennis Courts - Annual Household Membership Charge:

Background

At the last meeting of the Parks and Amenities Committee meeting on 9 January 2023 following consideration of the Town's Clerks Estimates report & supporting papers, the Committee recommended: *"The Town Clerk to research the following information from the Lawn Tennis Association's ClubSpark electronic tennis booking system about annual household memberships: (a) how many memberships are located outside of the City of the Parish of Truro; & (b) the potential of introducing different rates for Parish residents & users living outside of the Parish boundary"*.

The ClubSpark electronic booking system was introduced when the tennis courts were improved & renovated about 3 years ago. The tennis courts were resurfaced, refenced & electronic gates were installed. The improved facilities have been widely welcomed by both regular & new users. As part of the initial package the Council introduced a membership package. The LTA required that this be offered, at an initial price of £34.00 (since updated over recently recent years) to encourage people, particularly families, children & young people into tennis.

Apart from the obvious aim of improving health & well-being, the LTA supports the growth of tennis activity at the grass-root level & established users of all ages, including providing opportunities to try tennis for the first time, at an affordable price. Alongside this the Council contracted a tennis coach who works with their team providing individual & group coaching & free children's tennis sessions. Local education facilities make regular bookings & a Cornwall LTA event took place last summer.

The ClubSpark e-booking system enables the Council to provide an efficient, effective & responsive booking system, reducing administrative work in the Parks & Finance Office & a park attendant is no longer required to collect tennis monies.

Further, the system is available for people to use 24/7 to either take out a membership or pay & play. It operates automatically with user issues, user communications & updates, charge uprating, changes in terms & conditions, court closures for maintenance & weather etc & group/event bookings dealt with mainly by the Administrator. Issues tend to increase with a rise in court usage especially in the spring, summer & school holidays, which is also the busiest time for the Parks Department.

There are anticipated benefits both from & to the ongoing tennis pavilion development & developing Towns Fund Deal Project Boscawen Park Sports Hub Projects.

Annual Household Membership

For the current price of £38.00 (01 04 22 – 31 03 23) a household can purchase an annual membership on a rolling basis. This does not allow unlimited use of the tennis courts. It enables those people signed up to the membership to play tennis on 4 occasions in a 7-day rolling period, of either 1 or 2 hours booking slots. ClubSpark system will charge for any additional bookings over this limit. Each membership taken out has a nominated main contact.

Number of Annual Household Memberships

Information generated by ClubSpark indicates that as at 11 January, there were 428 active memberships (1 main contact per membership). Of these 202 had the TR1 postcode. It is not possible to provide this information based on the parish boundary. On that basis 226 had a non-TR1 postcode.

Potential Introduction of Different Rates

The ClubSpark can, in theory, be set up with membership packages with different eligibility criteria, however the system cannot check eligibility based on postcode electronically. Such 'policing' would have to be undertaken separately. This would create: a delay in timely membership processing (currently automatically processed electronically), introduce an additional process which would need to be processed manually by system administrators during normal Council working hours & Data Protection requirements would also need to be considered. This would be mainly undertaken by Parks administration staff who are already working under pressure following the ongoing organisation & restructure.

The Town Clerk further considers that if differential charges were introduced this may reduce the number of memberships package ie reduce income & further, this would be counter to the LTA's objectives in supporting the improvement of the tennis courts at Boscawen Park.

RECOMMENDED:

That the report be noted.

Roger Gazzard & Richard Budge
Town Clerk & Parks & Amenities Manager
1 February 2023