

Council – 22 September 2014

Petition – Increase in council pitch fees for 2014/15

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report is in response to the petition prepared by Walsall Junior Youth Football League against the proposal to increase pitch fees from the 2014/15 season, submitted to the Council on 14 April 2014.
- 1.2 The petition contained in excess of 1,500 signatures from teams and officials from the league, with signatories to the petition collected by 31 January 2014.
- 1.3 The Council's petitions scheme provides that: "If a petition contains at least 1,500 signatures it will be debated at a meeting of the Council. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting to which all Councillors can attend and speak. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. The petition organiser will be given 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action that the petition requests; not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to ask for further information. Where the issue is one where the Cabinet are required to make the final decision the Council will decide to make recommendations to the Cabinet. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this will be published on our website."

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1. The proposed budget reductions for 2014/15 included the removal of subsidised sports pitch maintenance at a total cost of circa £90,000 per year. The levels of subsidy were estimated at between 54% for senior football with changing facilities and 323% for junior football.
- 2.2 The 2014/15 budget consultation process had two phases
 - Phase 1 (early September – 23 October) where the public commented on where they thought savings could and couldn't be made.
 - Phase 2 (24 October – 14 November) where specific budget proposals were discussed with user groups etc.

- 2.3 Following public consultation, it was agreed at Cabinet on 5 February 2014 that the proposed removal of subsidy to sports pitch users for maintenance of grassed sports pitch facilities, equating to £90,000 per year, would be removed from the draft budget proposals for 2014/15, deferred for one year and the proposal reviewed. This was subsequently reflected in the decision taken on the budget by full Council at its meeting on 27 February 2014.
- 2.4 No increases were made to sports pitch provision for 2014/15 and discussions have been ongoing with sports clubs, football leagues and facilities managers regarding sustainable charges and possible price increases for 2015/16.

3.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the content of the petition be noted and discussions continue with relevant groups and individuals on budget proposals for 2015/16.

Jamie Morris
Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services)

11 September 2014