

Culture and Communities Committee

10am, Thursday, 5 December 2024

Public Spaces – Events Charging, including Parks Levy

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes this update on event charging for public spaces;
 - 1.1.2 Agree the re-wording of the categories to better reflect the intentions of the public spaces policy (Appendix 2);
 - 1.1.3 Agree to bring forward the planned review (following 12 months of operation) to six months and to note that this will include feedback from stakeholders and elected members on the operation of the charging scheme; and
 - 1.1.4 Notes that any uplift approved as part of the Fees and Charges for the Council budget 2025/26 will be applied from 1 April 2025 (prior to any review of the model).

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Public Spaces – Events Charging, including Parks Levy

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report responds to a number of actions agreed by the Council and Committee in respect of public spaces – events charging, including parks levy – and provides an update on implementation of the charging model.
- 2.2 Officers recommend that the planned 12-month review is brought forward by six months in order to make adjustments to ensure the process and charging model are fit for purpose.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 5 October 2023, Committee [agreed](#) the introduction of the Use of Public Spaces for Events and Filming Policy, the accompanying charging model and application process which was launched on 1 October 2024.
- 3.2 On 21 March 2024, the Council [approved](#) the following adjusted motion by Councillor Day:
 - 3.2.1 To call for the establishment of a voluntary levy on all major Princes Street Gardens events.
 - 3.2.2 To envisage this levy could be used to create a Development Fund which would help maintain and upgrade the Gardens.
 - 3.2.3 To understand productions such as the Fly Festival, had already expressed an interest in voluntary levies that would maintain facilities and venues such as Princes Street Gardens.
 - 3.2.4 To note that terms and conditions for operating events in West Princes Street Gardens and the Ross Bandstand were agreed by Culture and Communities Committee in October 2022 limiting the number of major events per annum.
 - 3.2.5 To request a report to the Culture and Communities Committee in two cycles to investigate how best such a levy would be administered ensuring the report was fully aligned with the other reports mentioned above”
- 3.3 On 16 May 2024, Committee [approved](#) the following adjusted motion by Councillor Walker:

- 3.3.1 To request officers consider a surcharge for large commercial events, with additional funds raised provided to the Community Grants scheme, with the exception of Princes Street Gardens.
- 3.3.2 To request officers investigate harmonising charges for events held on all parts of the Meadows, down to the lowest rate currently charged.
- 3.3.3 To agree that implementation would begin for events applying from 1 October 2024.
- 3.3.4 To request a further report outlining the possibility of providing a proportional park hire reduced rate for Council-supported and Community/Charity/Civic/Ceremonial (with and without commercial activities) in non-premier parks who might wish to use a smaller geographical area than the whole park for the event.
- 3.3.5 To agree to receive a further report (in two cycles) detailing what the ring-fenced funding gathered from the parks ticket levy could be spent on.”
- 3.4 On 3 October 2024, Committee approved the following amendment by Councillor Heap:
 - 3.4.1 Officers are requested to produce a proposal to recover all costs related to large commercial events including, but not limited to, Murrayfield concerts that are incurred by the Council on a 100% basis and recommend what events it would be appropriate to apply this to, with the proposal to be included in a report by the December meeting of the Committee.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The [Events in Public Spaces – Revised Charging Model](#) (agreed at Culture and Communities committee on 16 May 2024) was implemented on 1 October 2024.
 - Parks Event Levy**
- 4.2 The agreed charging model included a mandatory levy for all premier park sites. The city’s premier parks are:
 - 4.2.1 Princes Street Gardens, including use of Ross Bandstand;
 - 4.2.2 Meadows and Bruntsfield Links;
 - 4.2.3 Calton Hill;
 - 4.2.4 Inverleith Park;
 - 4.2.5 Leith Links;
 - 4.2.6 Saughton Park; and
 - 4.2.7 Lauriston Castle Grounds.
- 4.3 This levy is in addition to other charges for services (such as waste and cleansing, transport and other related costs) that the Council incurs in supporting events within

the city. The levy is charged on a sliding scale based on the ticket price and overall capacity of the event.

4.4 The sliding scale is copied below for ease of reference:

Event Capacity	Ticket Price	Charge
> 20,000	£50 or over	£3 per ticket
	£10 to £49	£2 per ticket
> 5,000	£50 or over	£2 per ticket
	£10 to £49	£1 per ticket
500 to 4,999	£50 or over	£1 per ticket
	£10 to £49	£0.50 per ticket
Less than 500, or ticket price £9 or less		No charge
Community/Charity (no commerciality)		No charge

4.5 Income gained from this levy will be held in separate income accounts for each park and the money raised will be used to fund improvements in the park that the event(s) took place.

4.6 Works for each site are determined by officers based on the needs of the parks. The purpose of the money raised is not to cover routine maintenance, but to fund development improvements.

4.7 A table showing the current assessment of development improvements required in each of the parks is included in Appendix 1. This assessment is reviewed on an ongoing basis and reflects comments from local parks officers, local stakeholders and feedback via the public spaces process.

4.8 Details of the works completed using this fund will be included as part of the annual review of the public spaces process and event charging model.

4.9 Apart from contracted events (such as Edinburgh's Winter Festivals), the number of events within each park depends on event organisers choosing to hold their events within Edinburgh. Therefore, an estimate of income is not possible at this stage but, following the first annual review of the new process and charging model and annual trends become apparent, it is hoped that this will become easier.

4.10 Following feedback from internal and external stakeholders, the category descriptions have been adjusted to better reflect the intentions of the public spaces policy. The re-worded categories are included in Appendix 2 for approval.

Event Charging Model – future adjustments

4.11 A variety of suggestions from elected members have been received in relation to future adjustments to the event charging model and updates on these suggestions are provided below:

4.11.1 Large commercial event surcharge:

4.11.1.1 This suggestion is being progressed and, based on the events taking place within the next six months, officers will provide a recommendation for committee approval in the next report;

- 4.11.1.2 Any additional surcharge is likely to be a percentage of overall costs added onto the overall costs of council services for the event and therefore proportionate to the scale of the event taking place;
 - 4.11.1.3 It is not proposed to bring this surcharge forward earlier as time is required to allow the initial process and charging model to settle in, alongside engagement with potentially affected stakeholders and providing adequate notice of any change.
- 4.11.2 Harmonising charges for events in the Meadows:
- 4.11.2.1 This suggestion has been progressed and approved by Regulatory Committee. Events taking place on the Meadows are now subject to the same charges regardless of the ward it takes place within.
- 4.11.3 Proportional park hire charges for events based on area used:
- 4.11.3.1 The charging model is also designed to favour community events with less costs (if any) applicable to them. As part of the review process, consideration will be given to how this is working in practice and whether any improvements could be made.
- 4.11.4 Full cost recovery for all council services:
- 4.11.4.1 This suggestion is being progressed and, based on the events taking place within the next six months, with a recommendation expected when the review of how the process is operating is reported back to Committee;
 - 4.11.4.2 The charging model currently in place was considered to be proportionate based on the scale of events taking place. Additional charges (e.g. for officer time) is likely to introduce more negotiation with organisers (e.g. do the Council really need x number of officers on site/in the control room?) which may impact implementation of safe and effective event planning and organisation;
 - 4.11.4.3 It is proposed to review this during the first review of operation of the charging model, to engage with the stakeholders who may be affected and to ensure that adequate notice of any new charges is provided.
- 4.11.5 Uplift in Transport charges:
- 4.11.5.1 Transport and Environment Committee will be asked to consider a revised charging model of road occupation and events in November 2024;
 - 4.11.5.2 If approved, and subject to the approval of the Council, these charges will be introduced from 1 January 2025.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Culture and Communities committee agreed to an annual review of the process and charging model (currently scheduled for October 2025), however as the model is in its first year and suggestions for improvement have come forward, it is proposed to carry out a review after six months of operation. This will provide information on how the model is working but means that feedback from stakeholders can be considered for implementation during financial year 2025/26.
- 5.2 Investigations are continuing to identify a preferred booking system to facilitate the renewed approach for the use and cost of public spaces in the city. Artifax is already used by the Council's cultural venues for this purpose and the costs of a wider roll-out of this system to the teams involved with the public spaces process is being followed up and presented to Finance and Resources committee in January 2025.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The financial impact of the new charging model and parks levy is difficult to predict for Council services and the city. Officers will monitor the numbers and/or nature of events coming to Edinburgh to identify if there are any impacts. This will form part of the review of the operation of the model.
- 6.2 The Council's cultural venues already use Artifax for cultural venues. It is therefore compatible with Council ICT systems. A request will be submitted to CGI to ascertain the financial commitment required for set up, additional user accounts and officer training with the potential for these costs to be met from the Culture and Wellbeing revenue budget in 2025/26.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 An interim Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is currently being developed and will be kept updated throughout the first year of operation and will be finalised as part of the review process.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

Environmental Impacts

- 8.3 It is anticipated that there should be a net positive effect as organisers, particularly those of a commercial nature, will be encouraged to sign up to the Green Arts Initiative, UN Sports for Climate Action Framework (Race to Zero) signatory or be ISO 20121 certified which will benefit the city in reaching its Net Zero 2030 target.
- 8.4 Further, the anticipated improvements to premier parks sites should also provide a net positive effect with initiatives such as upgrading or adding new electrical power points reducing the need to use diesel generators in our public spaces.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 Prior to the Public Spaces policy being agreed by Committee in October 2023, a wide ranging and thorough consultation took place with stakeholders. These stakeholders are being kept up to date with the progress of the process and event charging model.
- 9.2 Should Committee wish to press on with changes prior to the review being completed, there are several risks to consider:
- 9.2.1 At the time of writing this report, recruitment is progressing to provide additional support within the public spaces team therefore capacity to make changes to the operating model may be challenging until additional support is in place;
- 9.2.2 The launch of the new process and charging model happened on time and the appropriate stakeholders informed, however the internal arrangements for processing are still being worked through, particularly in relation to joint invoicing in anticipation of the first invoices going out in early 2025. Any further changes may impact on the changes required; and
- 9.2.3 Stakeholders were informed at time of launch of an anticipated rise of transport costs (should this be agreed by Transport and Environment Committee and the Council). However, they are not made aware of any other potential changes. Therefore, there is a risk of impacting the relationship between the Council and event organisers if further changes are made without engagement with stakeholders.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Use of West Princes Street Gardens and Ross Bandstand](#)

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Current Assessment of improvements required for each premier parks site

Appendix 2 – Updated categories with revised descriptions

Appendix 1 – Current Assessment of improvement priorities for each premier parks site

Premier Parks Sites	Funding split	Improvement priorities identified
Princes Street Gardens, including use of Ross Bandstand	50% West Princes Street Gardens 50% Ross Bandstand	Princes Street Gardens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage infrastructure improvements, including nature-based solutions • Additional/upgraded electrical points • Path and banking upgrades Ross Bandstand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of small level infrastructure for use by smaller events to allow greater use of space with minimal costs
Meadows and Bruntsfield Links	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair/upgrade of wooden cricket pavilion and golf clubhouse • Upgrade of public toilets • Enrichment of naturalised grassland/wildflower meadow establishment • Infrastructure to help manage unauthorised vehicle access
Calton Hill	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Path upgrades and drainage infrastructure improvements • Signage upgrade • Interpretative panel upgrade • Provision of public water supply • Provision of defibrillator • Management of scrub planning, i.e. gorse management
Inverleith Park	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs/improvements to the Boating Pond • Improve trim trail and replace outdoor gym equipment • Orchard upgrade • Delivery of masterplan proposals which include; expansion of playground, repair/upgrade/repurpose of Ferranti Pavilion and Bowling Green and repurpose of depot facility as new park visitor/community facility

Leith Links	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve signage, including maps, wayfinding and historical information ● Addition of picnic benches and associated hardstanding ● Delivery of masterplan proposals with priority for the delivery of the Activity Hub plans
Saughton Park	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve entrance points ● Replace poor quality fencing along the Water of Leith
Lauriston Castle Grounds	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve entrance points ● Additional electrical points

The above priorities are based on recommended improvements as identified as part of the annual Park Quality Assessments and Master Plan proposals as undertaken. It also takes into account feedback from local stakeholders, including elected members, via the public spaces process and associated procurement processes.

The public spaces team will also work alongside colleagues in parks, finance and procurement to get proposals costed and investigate whether funds raised annually could be saved over a number of years to help fund the larger projects noted above.

There are other Council projects and strategies underway and under development which are also involved in these areas, such as the Princes Street and Waverley Valley strategy and Ross Bandstand/West Princes Street Gardens consultation. Officers will therefore keep these priorities under review and update as required.

Appendix 2 – Updated categories with revised descriptions

Charging Category	Event Type	Cost recovery
March/Parade/Procession	Is your event a March/Parade/Procession only? ie. no other licensable activities (Please apply via the Marches & Parades process)	0%**
Community, Charity & Civic (non-commercial)	Is your event run solely by volunteers on a not-for-profit basis and is a charity, local group, community council or registered Friends of Parks Group with all proceeds going back to the local community? <i>To verify status please provide your organisation's charity number and a copy of your constitution or aims and objectives.</i> <i>NB. Post-event you may be asked to provide a statement of accounts showing money raised and expenses incurred.</i>	0%
Community & Charity (commercial)	Is your event run by a charity and involves commercial activities? ie. paid staff, sale of goods/services, event charges. <i>Please provide details of your organisation's charity number.</i>	50%*
Council-supported	Does your event or organisation receive grant funding or funding via a contract from the City of Edinburgh Council? <i>If yes, please provide evidence and value of grant/funding</i>	50%*

Commercial	Does your event/organisation operate commercially? ie. paid staff, sale of goods/services, event charges	100%
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