



Coventry City Council

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Briefing Note

To

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

11 November 2009

Subject

Fees and Charges , ICT and participation within Culture Leisure and Libraries

1 Purpose of the Report

To provide the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee with an update on Fees and Charges and the use of ICT and participation within Culture, Leisure and Libraries as requested at the meeting of the Committee on 3 December 2008.

2 Recommendations

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are recommended to:

2.1 Note the current position/information.

3 Background

3.1 As part of the consideration of the reports presented to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on 3 December 2008 an update report on both fees and charges and the use of ICT within Culture, Leisure and Libraries were requested, in addition to information regarding participation levels. It was also requested that similar information on participation at Trust sites be included.

3.2 The report is divided into two sections:

- Section 4, which compares income from 2006/7 up to 2008/9 together with some general observations/information and participation levels. It then proceeds to give information on Trust partners' participation over the last two years.
- Section 5 comments on the use of ICT within Culture and Leisure and Libraries.

4 Fees and Charges

Information

4.1 Fees and charges were reviewed in 2007 and a report presented to Cabinet on 11 September 2007. Since then fees and charges have been increased in line with that report and inflation. A further report was also brought to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on 3 December 2008. In overall terms Culture Leisure and Libraries has an income target for 2008/9 relating to fees and charges of £887,225 and achieved £918,181 actual income.

- 4.2 Forms of income that do not relate to participation have been excluded from the remainder of this analysis. These include items which relate directly to expenditure (i.e. sales), recharges or rental income.
- 4.3 Several items besides fees and charges can influence the income levels within Culture, Leisure and Libraries including the weather, timing of public holidays and seasonal variations. Managers were asked to look in more detail at their income taking note of instances where income was prone to fees and charges changes. They were also asked to consider complaints, any operational issues that have arisen and any loss of activity/participation.
- 4.4 It should also be noted that on 22 September 2009 a report was approved by Cabinet recommending that Corporate Management Team (CMT) be charged with the task of exercising governance over charging arrangements and that a working group of CMT be tasked with reviewing all the City Council's fees and charges.
- 4.5 The following information has been broken down into the service areas of Libraries, Parks and Sports Development, together with information about key partners.

4.6 **Libraries**

- 4.6.1 At the time that the revised charges were introduced, a number complaints were received, the majority of these relating to libraries. These were detailed in the December 2008 report as follows:

Table 1: Complaints for period covering 1 April 2008 to 7 November 2008

Nature of complaint	Number of complaints
Talking book charges	29
DVD/CD charges	15
Library charges (general)	28
General (e.g. withdrawal of concessions for pensioners)	19
TOTAL	91

For the remainder of 2008/09 the following complaints were received:

Table 2: Complaints from 8 November 2008 to 31 March 2009

Nature of complaint	Number of complaints
Talking book charges	0
DVD/CD charges	2
Library charges (general)	3
General (e.g. withdrawal of concessions for pensioners)	2
TOTAL	7

- 4.6.2 A breakdown of Libraries income relating to fees and charges received at the end of 2008/09 compared with 2007/08 and 2006/7 is shown below. The amounts of income for each charge is not allocated to a specific budget code therefore some items are amalgamated.

Table 3 Libraries Fees and Charges Income comparison

Items	2008/09	2007/08	2006/7
	£	£	£
Hire – DVD (4.6.3)	51, 138	56, 271	65,736
Sales – photocopying (4.6.4)	21, 555	21, 410	20,638
Hire – Talking Books (4.6.5)	7, 336	3, 373	3,567
Library Fees – Audio & Audio reservations (4.6.6)	19, 602	19, 849	24,148
Library Fees – Book reservations (4.6.7)	6, 340	4, 853	5,139
Library Fees – Overdue (4.6.7)	60, 692	43, 659	63,595
Fax income (4.6.8)	12, 297	14, 043	12,965
Total	178, 960	163, 459	195,788

4.6.3 DVDs

Whilst there has been a drop in income, there are a number of factors that need to be considered, including increased use of downloads, DVDs becoming cheaper to purchase publically, as well as the impact of the price increase by 25 pence. This situation may change if the recession continues and people have less disposable income. Special offers are being made to encourage higher usage. There was a reduction in the number of DVDs purchased, from 2478 in 2007/08 to 1474 in 2008/09 and it should be noted that due to expenditure controls the most up to date releases were not always available.

4.6.4 Photocopying

Small increase in income at Central Library.

4.6.5 Adult Spoken Word – Talking Books

Despite a number of complaints when charges were introduced income has risen by £4,000 as well as usage rising from 14690 issues in 2007/8 to 19003 in 2008/9 with only 29 complaints. This may be because users continue to use the service despite being unhappy at the charges. Another possibility is that the publicity brought new users to the service.

4.6.6 CDs (Audio and Audio Reservations)

New CDs are no longer purchased, so a decline in usage was expected. A working group has been established to look at the future of this provision.

4.6.7 Adult Book charges (book reservations and overdue charges)

There is a rise in income of £18,520 between 2007/8 and 2008/9 but a decrease in loan issues. Figures based on use of the TALIS business decisions system show that this was against issues of 1,558k in 2007/8 compared with 1,489k in 2008/9. The increase would seem therefore to be due to the increase in the fees and a stringent collection policy after the initial downturn in income in 2007/8.

4.6.8 Fax

Offers are being made during year to test out price reduction. With all branch libraries offering free of charge computer sessions, more people may be using e-mails rather than paying to fax.

4.6.9 Participation

The figures in relation to physical visits are shown in Table 4. Coventry has also been affected by the national decline in the number of physical visits to Libraries. The Local Studies section of the Library has now transferred to Trust, joining with the Archives to

form the Local History Centre, as part of Coventry Heritage and Arts Trust, which will effect visitor numbers for 2008/9 and the need to update Central Library.

Table 4 Library Physical Visits comparison

Library Visits	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
	2,136,958	2,140,151	2,109,981

An analysis of CIPFA data of visits of the other 15 "nearest neighbours" shows they also had a decline in numbers. However Coventry's decline has not been as great as others. Data for 2008/9 is not yet available for "nearest neighbours" to make a further comparison:

Items	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
15 other Nearest Neighbours average	1,362,326	1,397,417	1,427,215
15 other Nearest Neighbours % difference year on year	-2.51%	-2.09%	
Coventry	2,136,958	2,140,151	2,109,981
Coventry % difference year on year	-0.15%	+1.43%	

4.7 **Parks**

The table below shows income relating to fees and charges received at the end of the financial year compared with the previous year, together with details of Parks participation.

Table 5 Parks Fees and Charges Income comparison

Items	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Coombe Park	265,620	238,772	197,149
Other Parks	82,877	68,808	86,847
	348,497	307,580	283,996

It must be emphasised that all parks income is affected by weather conditions as they are outdoor activities and subject to seasonal variations. Weather conditions still remains the most important single factor in deciding whether or not people use these facilities. It is therefore very difficult to draw out significant trends and apportion them accurately to either an increase in the cost to the user or the prevailing weather conditions.

Consideration on participation also needs to take account of the fact that there were two Easter holidays in the financial year 2007/8 and none in 2008/9. The analysis comparison has further been complicated by the gradual devolvement of the income across different cost centres that were previously combined as one figure. In overall terms the following items are highlighted within Parks.

4.7.1 **Golf**

Pitch and putt participation at both the War Memorial Park and Allesley has declined between 2007/08 and 2008/09. This is partly attributable to poor summer weather, but the significantly increased charges for holders of a Passport to Leisure and Learning (from less than a quarter of the full price to exactly half), together with an increase in fees for both Senior Citizens and Juniors to bring it in line with other prices. According to research carried out by Sport England, there is also a national reduction in participation in age group 16 to 64 and Coventry will have been affected by this. It also

needs to be noted that the summer season (when most golf is played) in 2008 was a poor summer for the type of facilities we have.

Participation	2008/2009	2007/2008	2006/2007
War Memorial Park – Golf	4,236	5,891	5,533
Allesley Park – Golf	9,442	11,236	11,727
TOTALS	13,678	17,127	17,260

It is proposed to develop a Golf Development programme. One suggestion looks at the feasibility of introducing a school group fee for golf, with a fixed size group at a previously agreed price, rather than individual fee charges. This would meet government objectives by encouraging children to incorporate activity into their daily lives, and we could work with the Sports and Physical Activity Development team and schools to actively encourage this activity as part of their curriculum. Other possibilities include introducing special days or tournaments aimed at encouraging those who do not usually participate, family sessions and links from beginner lessons to intermediate lessons with our grant supported partner Brandon Wood Golf Course as golfers improve. We would welcome scrutiny comments on this programme to help us develop a more effective policy.

4.7.2 **Tennis**

Tennis has also seen year on year increases in revenue from 2007/8 of 8.5k to 2008/9 of £17,000. However, we have been unable to compare participation due to the change in the way that court hire is now charged. The charge is now on a court basis rather than per person. Tennis in the War Memorial Park has also seen the introduction of the initiative "Inspire to coach" which since June 2008 had 962 visits in the financial year 2008/9 and generated £3,000 of extra income in 2008/9.

4.7.3 **Bowls**

Bowling participation in the War Memorial Park and Spencer Park has increased, notwithstanding the adverse summer weather and the increased fees.

Participation	2008/2009	2007/2008	2006
War Memorial Park –Bowls	1,038 27 Pre Booked	804 25 Pre- booked	943
Spencer	442 141 Pre Booked	412 141 Pre- Booked	691
TOTALS	1,648	1,382	1,634

4.7.4 **Football**

One off bookings have significantly increased from 2007/08 to 2008/09. This is partly attributable to an improved monitoring system, including regular checks to prevent unauthorised use of pitches. Prices charged to the football leagues also increased, but there was no demonstrable alteration in the number of pitches booked by the leagues. Despite the price increases, the leagues still receive a considerable discount, making it unlikely that they would take their custom elsewhere, even if facilities allowed for this.

Participation	2008/2009	2007/2008	2006
All Parks	149 One Off Booking 646 League Bookings*	38 One Off Booking 646 League Bookings	230+ 383 (Some data on one league not available)
TOTALS*	795	684	613

4.7.5 **Coombe Country Park**

Analysis on educational activities is prone to the way income is received from schools for activities and the Children and Young People's Directorate for work placements aimed at hard to reach children.

The number of visitors is based on car park usage which has increased. The increase in car park income can be attributed to a combination of increased numbers of visitors and above inflation increase in actual income of £28,621.

Participation	2008/2009	2007/2008	2006/7
Education	8,034 student contacts	6,087 student contacts	6,323
Fishing	Season Tickets – 158 Day Tickets – 762	Season Tickets – 136 Day Tickets – 831	Season Tickets – 98 Day Tickets – 1326
Car Park Related	93,598	81,033	81,639

There has been a decline in fishing numbers with the result of a decline in income of £2,240, but it is believed that this is due to the nature of the stock and the reputation of the fishing quality amongst the angling fraternity, rather than changes to the fees and charges.

Usage of the exhibitions/events field was down by £724 compared to the income of the previous year, and it is believed this was largely attributable to adverse weather conditions.

4.7.6 **Ice Cream/Catering Tenders**

This encompasses the right to sell ice cream at Allesley, Coombe, Coundon Hall and War Memorial Parks, together with catering concessions at Coombe Country Park. The income targets set annually are based on the achieved tender price of the previous year. Consequently, variations in the tender sums offered by companies will depend on prevailing market conditions. This year we have received a higher figure for Coombe which has offset a similar under achievement at War Memorial Park.

The vandalism at Top Pool Lodge which destroyed the lodge may require an additional catering van to operate in this location until the facility is rebuilt and this is being investigated.

4.7.7 **Fairs and Circuses**

Five fairs or circuses are held at Hearsall Common each year. The income target for this site has been set at nearly £14,000 however extra fairs had to be introduced so as to reach the income levels. Following discussions with the Fair operators who had complained about the higher than average fees increases it was agreed to have a rent review at end of 2009.

Consideration needs to be given to establishing a fee policy for the hire of parks in relation to commercial and semi-commercial usage. At the moment Coombe events field charges and Hearsall Common day rates are used as a guide.

4.8 Sports Development

Table 6 shows income relating to fees and charges received at the end of the financial year compared with the previous year.

Table 6 Sports Fees and Charges Income comparison

Items	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Coventry Half Marathon	£31,328	£32,985	£32,765
Other Activities	£2,957	£1,404	£4,449
	£34,285	£34,389	£37,214

The main area of income for Sports Development is the fees collected for the Half Marathon and Mini Marathon. There was a decline due to a lower amount of runners than anticipated entering the two events, 2,591 in 2007 and 2,193 in 2008. The event is currently timetabled very close to Birmingham and Leicester and it is proposed that the event is moved to May in 2010. Indications for this year are that the figures will be higher than those for the 2008 event. Further information will be supplied at your meeting.

4.9 Grant Supported Partners

A major part of the work is done in conjunction with key partners who are Grant aided and it has been suggested that Scrutiny Board 2 have presentations from the Trusts as part of their scrutiny role:

4.9.1 Coventry Transport Museum continues to show increases.

	2008/2009	2007/2008	INCREASE/DECREASE
Coventry Transport Museum	357,439	333,582	7.15% Increase

4.9.2 Coventry Heritage and Arts Trust – which operates The Herbert, the Priory Visitors Centre and Lunt Fort. Whilst the figures show a significant increase it has to be remembered that considerable amounts of The Herbert were closed during 2007/08.

	2008/2009	2007/2008	INCREASE/DECREASE
Coventry Heritage and Arts Trust	248,761	95,004	162% Increase

4.9.3 Coventry Sports Foundation - which operates the AT7 Centre, Alan Higgs Centre, the former Midland Sports Centre and the new Xcel Centre showed an increase particularly with the Xcel Centre opening in 2008/09.

	2008/2009	2007/2008	INCREASE/DECREASE
Coventry Sports Foundation	1,050,589	971,350	8% Increase

4.9.4 Coventry Sports Trust – which operates the Coventry Sports and Leisure Centre, Foleshill Sports and Leisure Centre, Ricoh Arena gym facilities, Brandon Wood Golf Course and sports facilities at a number of School sites. The Sports Trust has recently taken on responsibility for running the Moat House NDC Leisure Centre.

	2008/2009	2007/2008	INCREASE/DECREASE
Coventry Sports Trust	1,052,231	914,078	15% Increase

4.9.5 The Belgrade Theatre continues to develop gradually from 90,358 in 2006/7 when alterations were taking place.

	2008/2009	2007/2008	INCREASE/DECREASE
Belgrade Theatre	128,922	128,029	0.7% Increase

4.10 Participation/Satisfaction information from Surveys

4.10.1 Monitoring information is also obtained via the national Active People surveys undertaken to provide information on participation of Adults for the National Indicators. The most recent results are shown below. NI 8 has an LAA target of 22.8% and targets set for the others that would show as a significant statistical change against a sample size of 500.

* = also LAA indicator	Base	Current Info Active People survey	National average	Targets
NI 8 Adult Participation in Sport*	18.8%	23.3% 2007/8 20.63% Interim	21.45%	22.8%
NI 9 Use of Public Libraries	54.3%	52.5% Interim	48.2%	60.4%
NI 10 Visits to Museums & Galleries	53.9%	53.8% Interim	53.2%	60.0%
NI 11 Engagement in the Arts	42.8%	42.2% interim	45.2%	48.8%

4.10.2 With regard to satisfaction levels information comes from the 2008 Place survey as follows:

Satisfaction levels	Base 2006 BVPI	Place Survey	National average
Sport & Leisure Facilities	53%	43%	46.2%
Public Libraries	71%	63.9%	69.0%
Museums & Galleries	54%	52.7%	41.5%
Theatres & concert halls	36%	44.8%	43.2%
Parks & Open Spaces	62%	60.7%	68.5%

4.10.3 In the 2008 Coventry Place Survey 88% of respondents said they used parks and open spaces, 36% at least once per week. This is the highest usage percentage of any City Council service. Satisfaction levels in 2006 were 62% and in 2008 were 60.7% against a national figure of 68.5%. User surveys conducted during quarters 1 and 2 of 2009 at key sites indicate a satisfaction level of 73.3% overall for parks and open spaces.

4.10.4 NI 199 monitors children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas. Coventry is rates sixth out of sixteen nearest neighbours and just below the national average of 44% with 43.3%. It should be noted that the Tell Us survey was conducted before the current Playbuilder and BIG Lottery externally funded play programmes started.

4.10.5 Within Libraries a Children and Adult Survey takes place every three years. The last adult survey was conducted in 2006 and showed 92% satisfaction, which matched the national average of 92%. The last children's survey was conducted in 2007 and showed 82% satisfaction against a national average of 85%.

5 Use of ICT

5.1 **PeopleLink Community Information database**

PeopleLink is a database available via the internet managed by the Libraries and Information Services and supported by the Marketing and Communications team as part of their joint information and promotion role.

The database is supported by organisations from across the city and beyond, who provide community information which helps people solve problems in their everyday lives. This may include key information such as where to go for debt counselling, what leisure opportunities are available or what benefits are available. Community information is varied and continually changing.

PeopleLink was developed as a responsive and flexible service to meet these needs i.e., to provide a:

- user friendly information and signposting service to make links between people and appropriate local organisations/services and other information held within and outside libraries.
- system which could easily be updated/maintained and expanded.
- responsive and flexible computerised database to meet a range of needs/enquiries through keyword, area, language and access search capabilities.

The PeopleLink Community Information Service alongside the Older People's Information Network (OPIN) had 277,545 visitor sessions during 2007/08, an average of 760 visits per day with the total number of pages viewed at 441,275. During 2008/09 the visitor sessions were 158,812, a decrease of 118,733. There are currently around 1300 organisations on the PeopleLink database of local organisations – organisations and services in Coventry or who serve Coventry (excluding businesses).

Peoplelink was relaunched on a new web platform in August 2009 to try and improve accessibility to information. It will also link into the new Coventry PCT Health Hub website. To ensure use of the new system, colleagues are currently looking at the best way to monitor usage.

5.2 **Public access computers – The People's Network**

The People's Network is the public part of the roll-out of Government's National Grid for Learning which also provided access to computers in schools and ICT training for teachers and library staff. There are 17 libraries, with 200 computers in total, ranging from four to fifty, depending on the size of library. Last year there were a number of libraries with faulty public computers. These were replaced from mid November 2008, and may have been partly responsible for a decline in usage. Another reason for a decline in usage is the increase in the use of IT in other areas such as schools and the increase in laptops connecting to the internet through wifi, including the Central Library.

Internet access is not currently available on the temporary mobile at Allesley Park but this will be resolved once the new Allesley Library is in place in 2010.

5.3 **TALIS – Libraries Management Information System**

TALIS is the software package which issues all books, CDs, DVDs, talking books and other media, calculates fines and other charges and provides the database of library holdings – the catalogue. TALIS Ltd is the national leader in providing library management information systems to both public and academic libraries and Coventry benefits from the partnership by providing pilot testing of new products in return for achieving a significant discount on new packages and software releases. It is providing the platform for the new web version of PeopleLink and work continues on developing the use of the system.

5.4 **Self Service through Radio Frequency ID (RFID) within Libraries**

The RFID based system will allow a much simpler self serve option and will allow for other facilities such as book sorting and stock control. This is currently operational at Arena, Bell Green, Earlsdon and Tile Hill Libraries as well as the Central Library. An evaluation as to the effectiveness of the system will be carried out at these Libraries. Issues currently exist in relation to the Gov-Connect changes which are being resolved.

5.5 **Cultural Portal**

A cultural portal is being developed with several of our key cultural partners to share event and promotional activity information. Although not all key cultural providers are currently on board, the benefits of sharing key information to provide customers with up-to-date information and what's happening in the city in one place (www.visitcoventry.co.uk) will ensure that others come on board as it develops.

Another important benefit for this portal is event/promotional planning, as all event organisers and partners will be able to see other city events in an annual events calendar to avoid duplication, clashes between events or potential joint marketing and promotions.

5.6 **Coventry Active**

Coventry Active is a database that is available via the City Council's website which details clubs, classes and activities. Individuals and clubs around the city populate the site which allows those searching to look for a particular activity or activities close to their home. The number of visits to the Coventry Active database were 85,321 in 2007/8 and 71,403 in 2008/9. There are currently 320 providers on the system, which exceeds the original target for 2008/09. The members of the programme (those who populate the database) are also contacted by e-mail on a regular basis, receiving information on club development evenings, coach education programmes, funding streams available and special events information. The Marketing and Communications Team has also designed a template and the quarterly e-newsletter which goes out to all Coventry Active members and interested parties. However we have seen a decline in direct hits this year and a promotional campaign is due to take place in January/February 2010 with the PCT.

5.7 **Surveys**

As part of the work undertaken for the War Memorial Park's Heritage Lottery Fund bid and the Green Space Strategy, work on events and the libraries opening hours review, various surveys have been undertaken using PDAs (Hand helds) and various software such as "Survey Monkey" and "CRT" standpoint which are now also being used corporately to undertake surveys.

5.8 ***Handheld Technology in Parks***

The efficiencies to be gained by utilising mobile technology in terms of services being provided are becoming more apparent. The Parks Service intention was to develop a system for effectively recording and monitoring electronic data which utilises hand held technology as reported previously.

The user surveys began in April 2009 and as the year progresses will help to build up information on areas that need to be tackled as well as providing evidence for Green Flag assessments, react to customer comments and assist to prioritise spend.

The use of this technology is also feeding into the fundamental review of Grounds Maintenance currently taking place involving Culture, Leisure and Libraries, City Services and Coventry Direct.

5.9 ***Income Monitoring***

We are making continuous improvements to our data collection by trying to bring together participation and income levels information.

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