

3rd September 2014

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Culture, Leisure, Sports & Parks) Councillor A Khan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director, Place

Ward(s) affected:

Earlsdon

Title:

War Memorial Park Water Feature e-Petition – Request to remove the new charge for children using the water feature

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

An e-petition organised by Councillor Allan Andrews, an Earlsdon Ward Councillor, with 100 e-signatures, requests the removal of the new charge for children using the water feature.

The e-petition reads:

“We, the undersigned, hereby call upon Coventry City Council to remove its new charge for young children using the popular water feature at the War Memorial Park”.

The park is under the control of the Parks Service within the Place Directorate.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member (Culture, Leisure, Sports & Parks) is recommended to:

1. Approve that, in consideration of the low level of income anticipated to be achieved and the impact this charge may have on families, the charge for children to use the water feature be withdrawn.

List of Appendices included:

N/A

Other useful background papers:

Report of the 8th April 2014 to the Cabinet Member (Energy and Environment) entitled - Place Directorate Fees and Charges 2014/15 – Energy & Environment Portfolio

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel, or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 As part of the Councils' income generation review, charges to use the water feature in War Memorial Park (WMP) were considered and approved at your meeting on 8th April 2014. This, in part, approved a charge of £1.00 per child per day to use the water feature and its introduction was intended to help support staffing and running costs of this facility.
- 1.2 The water feature opened in 2005 and has been free to use since that time. It is operated for 77 days per year, subject to weather conditions and, two casual Recreational Assistants are appointed each year to oversee its use.
- 1.3 In addition to staffing costs, there are also chemicals, water, electricity and maintenance costs together with annual expenditure on commissioning and de-commissioning the facility and on replacing plant and equipment.
- 1.4 Although the charge was approved for implementation this year, early season problems with the underground plant caused a delay to the facility being re-opened; during this period concerns about the impending introduction of a charge to use the water feature were raised by members of the public and subsequently via the e-petition, which resulted in the charge not being implemented as intended.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 There are two central options to consider:
 1. To retain the charge as previously approved, or
 2. To reconsider whether, given the relatively small amount of income anticipated to be recovered, the charge for children to use the water feature should be withdrawn.
- 2.2 In considering these options it is worth pointing out that excluding maintenance and replacement costs, this facility costs approximately £17,000 to operate annually. The proposed usage charge of £1.00 per child per day was estimated to recover £5,000 to help meet the overall running costs of this facility.
- 2.3 Currently, there are severe pressures on all Council budgets and although only a small element of the operating costs was estimated to be recovered, it did provide an opportunity to recover some of the costs incurred. The introduction of the charge was not intended to recover all costs to operate this facility although this is a key objective of the Fees & Charges Review.
- 2.4 You are recommended to agree that: in consideration of the low level of income anticipated to be achieved and the impact this charge may have on families, the charge for children to use the water feature be withdrawn.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

No consultation has taken place on this issue

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 To be agreed subject to approval of the recommendation within this report

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications

The approval of the recommendation to remove the charge for the use of the water feature will result in a loss of expected income of c£5,000. This facility would therefore remain fully subsidised at a cost of c£17k per year.

5.2 Legal implications

No legal implications associated with this matter.

6. Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

N/A

6.2 How is risk being managed?

N/A

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

A reduction in anticipated financial resources will negatively impact on the delivery of the Medium Financial Strategy which supports the work and priorities of the Council

6.4 Equalities / EIA Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The provision of a free facility would remove a barrier to those wishing to use this facility, particularly those families who have enjoyed this facility free of charge previously.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

N/A

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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Appendices

None