

AGENDA ITEM 3**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****22nd January 2015****MEDIUM TERM SERVICE PLANNING – SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSALS****INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES FOR THE USE OF SPORTS PITCHES****JOINT REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE SERVICES AND THE GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY AND CHILDRENS SERVICES****AUTHORS: Chris Lee - Group Director Corporate and Frontline Services (01443 424026) and Dave Batten - Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside (01443) 490256****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report outlines the Service Change proposal relating to Charging for the Use of Sports Pitches as required as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements, specifically in the context of the need to reduce spend and enable the Council to set a balanced budget into the medium term. In relation to the proposal, the report also includes the results of the comprehensive consultation exercise that ended on the 16th December 2014 and the Equality Impact Assessment completed for the proposal.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet decides on whether or not, and if so how, it wishes to proceed with:

- 2.1 The service change proposal in respect of Charging for the Use of Sports Pitches as detailed in this report having considered the Consultation Exercise attached at Appendix 1 and the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 2.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On the 10th October 2014, Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Management Team outlining a number of service change proposals as part of the Council's Medium Term Service planning arrangements.
- 3.2 One proposed service change was in relation to the introduction of a charge for the use of Sports Pitches, and in this regard Cabinet determined to initiate a consultation with users of sports facilities on the proposal.

4. CHARGING FOR THE USE OF SPORTS PITCHES – THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal formed part of wider report which contained a number of other service change proposals. The report, in full, can be found at <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/cabinet/2014/10/10/reports/agendaitem2servicechangeproposals.pdf>
- 4.2 Paragraphs 5.1 to 5.7 of the October report related to proposed changes to Area Parks which include the proposal to introduce a charge for the use of sports pitches. The relevant paragraphs are repeated below.

Extract from 10th October 2014 Cabinet Report

PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

Area Parks

The core function of the service is to provide and maintain parks, play areas and sports pitches plus to maintain countryside areas, highways verges and other green spaces throughout the county borough.

The facilities maintained by the service include 67 football pitches, 38 rugby pitches, 26 Bowling Greens and 15 Cricket Grounds.

The service has a budget of £4.308M.

SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL

It is proposed to reconfigure the service, specifically to:

- *Remove permanent attendants from all parks other than Darren Park and Aberdare Park;*
- *Transfer static groundsmen from Rhondda Parks to a mobile service;*
- *Reduce the cleansing / maintenance in parks;*
- *Reduce the quality of the appearance of green spaces outside park borders due to reduced capacity for design and reduced frequency of grass cutting;*
- *Reduce Council establishment grounds maintenance, e.g. day centres, offices;*
- *Optimise the management arrangements across the service and other staffing efficiencies.*

Currently no charge is made by the Council for the use of sports pitches across the County Borough. It is proposed to introduce charges for the use of Bowling Greens, Cricket Grounds and Rugby / Football pitches as follows:

Activity	Proposed RCT Annual Charge £	Proposed RCT weekly Charge £
<u>Bowls (estimated 22 week season)</u>		
Adults	50.00	2.27
Concessionary	25.00	1.14
<u>Cricket (estimated 18 week season)</u>		
Adult Team	450.00	25.00
Concessionary Team	100.00	5.56
<u>Football / rugby (estimated 34 week season)</u>		
<u>Adults</u>		
First Team	600.00	17.65
Second Team	450.00	13.24
Third and subsequent teams	300.00	8.82
<u>Concessionary</u>		
First Team	100.00	2.94
Second Team	75.00	2.21
Third and subsequent teams	50.00	1.47

(the proposed charges assume no changes are made to current operational management arrangements at any facility and the provision would remain significantly subsidised by the Council)

It is proposed that Cabinet initiate a consultation with users of the sports facilities on the introduction and level of charges proposed

(at para 5.5) and that the results of this consultation be reported back to Cabinet in order for it to determine whether and if so how it wishes to proceed with the proposal.

Implementation of these proposals would deliver savings for the Council of £0.692M (full year impact) of which £0.125M is from the proposed introduction of charges.

- 4.3 At the meeting, Cabinet resolved to initiate a consultation with users of sports facilities on the proposed introduction of a charge and level of charges as detailed above.
- 4.4 It also agreed to receive a further report detailing the results and feedback from the consultation process, together with an equality impact assessment, in respect of the proposed introduction and level of charges proposed for Parks and Countryside Services, in order for it to determine whether and how it wishes to progress with this element of the proposal.
- 4.5 This report provides this feedback.

5. CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 5.1 As outlined to Cabinet in the Report on the 10th October 2014, the Council is under no statutory duty to consult on this proposal and did not consider there to be a common law duty to consult in regards the same. Nonetheless the Council took the view that it would consult with relevant stakeholders on the introduction of charges for the use of Bowling Greens, Cricket Grounds and Rugby / Football pitches. This was because the product of the consultation may be particularly significant and it would assist the Council when undertaking an EIA.
- 5.2 Accordingly a targeted 8 (eight) week consultation was undertaken with stakeholders and users of sports pitches between the 21st October and the 16th December, 2014.
- 5.3 The report detailing the results of the Consultation Exercise is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.4 In addition, prior to the meeting a facility was made available for all Cabinet Members to view all consultation responses received through the various channels as a result of the Consultation Exercise. This was to ensure Cabinet give due regard to all elements of the feedback received and not just the specific numbers supporting the proposal, or not, and the summarised views outlined in the Consultation Exercise report. This approach also ensures Cabinet has a comprehensive

understanding of the wide range of views and opinions provided by the consultees prior to making their decision.

6. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Cabinet Members will of course be fully aware and mindful of the general equality duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010 and the specific public sector equality duties applicable to the Council as a local authority in Wales. Accordingly and as stated in the 10th October 2014 report, an Equality Impact Assessment (“EIA”) has been prepared for this Proposal and is attached at Appendix 2.
- 6.2 The EIA is now presented to Cabinet to ensure that a fully informed decision is made on this proposal.
- 6.3 The EIA considers the potential impact of the proposal on the designated protected groups and identifies any potential mitigation factors either in place or which can be put in place.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Having reviewed in detail the consultation material in relation to the proposal to introduce a charge for the use of sports pitches, as per paragraph 5.4, and having now had the opportunity to review all of the information contained in the appendices to this report, it is now for Cabinet to decide on whether or not, and if so how, it wishes to proceed with this proposal.



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APPENDIX 1



HAVE YOUR SAY
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2015/16 Sports Pitch Charges| Consultation:

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Consultation Team
December 2014

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CYLLID
Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf 
BUDGET
CHALLENGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section outlines a summary of the main issues and themes raised during the consultation process.
- This report sets out the key issues and themes that have arisen as part of the consultation process. This along with access to the full responses received will provide the Cabinet with the materials needed to assist in the final decision making process on the proposal. The consultation results will need to be considered in conjunction with the Equality Impact Assessment and any other information that is available on the proposed service change.
- The Council is facing an unprecedented financial challenge over the next 4 years and all services and their delivery must be assessed. This consultation report relates to the proposal that was put before Cabinet on 10th October, 2014 entitled **Parks and Countryside Service**. The proposal is outlined in more detail in section 4. If implemented, the proposals contained in this report would deliver £0.125M of savings per year for the Council.
- At the 10th October meeting, Cabinet agreed to proceed to a formal consultation on the proposals. The consultation began on the 21st October and ended on the 16th December, 2014. The following section outlines the methodology used.
- The consultation has been conducted in-house. Before beginning the consultation, discussions were held between officers on the most effective approach to take to ensure that everyone who was potentially affected by the service changes would be able to have their say. The consultation process and materials were agreed by the Council's Corporate Management Team. The consultation materials were considered to provide clear information in an appropriate and understandable format.
- This report attempts to provide a readable summary of the main responses received. No attempt at recommendations are made, the document has been put together impartially and will be presented to Cabinet to aid decision making.
- The following number of responses were received;
 - 39 emails (including attachments, such as letters)
 - 10 letters
 - 1 petition received via email, entitled The Death of Sport in RCT (345 signatures)
 - 3 x pre-completed responses:
 - Pre-completed A (75 responses)
 - Pre-completed B (669 responses)

- Pre-completed C (6 responses)
- 9 completed forms given out at public engagement sessions

Summary of Responses

- Open responses in relation to the proposal were received from 58 individuals (letters, emails and forms handed in at meetings). The number of responses totalled 1153.
- A number of themes emerged from the analysis of the proposal as follows;

Table 1. Themes emerging from analysis

Sports Pitch Charges
Agree with a charge being levied
Disagree with the principle of charging
Disagree with the level of charging
Disagree with the principle of charging for junior players
Disagree with the principle of charging for 60+ players
Disagree with the level of charging for junior players
Disagree with the level of charging for 60+ players
Preference for stepping up charges over medium term
Disagree with up-front payments
Open to charges based on pitch use (use of each club / amount of times per week used etc)
Equitability over different types of pitches
Inability to pay adhoc fees (rink fees, 3G, Astro turf)
Consideration for team based charge for bowls
Consideration to peppercorn leases
Consideration to market rates
Negative impact on health, wellbeing & social skills of the youth
Negative impact on health, wellbeing & social skills of the over 60's
Community spirit (lack of it)
Inspection regime
Clubs will fold
Value for money (quality of service, extending the season)
Impact on disabled service users
Impact on out of work users

- A lot of different points were raised during the consultation, from many different types of clubs, although there were a lot of similar suggestions and ideas.

Next Steps

- This report will be presented to Cabinet for consideration, along with filed responses that are available for Cabinet to view should they so wish, before any final decisions on the level of charges are made.
- The consultation results, although an important part of the decision making process, are not the only consideration to take into account. The Cabinet will also need to consider other information available alongside the consultation responses (for example the results of the Equality Impact Assessment).

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the consultation findings for the Council's service change proposal – Sports Pitch Charges.
- 1.2 Section 2 provides some brief background information on the budget gap faced by the Council.
- 1.3 Section 3 provides detail of the methodology used.
- 1.4 Section 4 outlines the details of the proposed service change.
- 1.5 Section 5 provides a summary of the general views.
- 1.6 Section 6 provides detail of the School Council feedback.
- 1.7 Section 7 provides a brief conclusion of findings.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 26th February 2014, Council approved the 2014/15 revenue budget strategy. This strategy set out the Council's response to the decrease in Welsh Government funding of -3.7% for 2014/15 and provided an update on the estimated budget shortfall over the medium term to 2017/18.
- 2.2 At the time of the Council meeting in February, the estimated budget gap over the 4 years from 2014/15 to 2017/18 was £63.4M (this is before closing the £14.4M budget gap for 2014/15, through £9.2M of permanent base budget reductions and £5.2M via 'one off' transitional funding).
- 2.3 The latest assessment of these projections (Council 29th October 2014) indicates an estimated budget gap over the 3 years from 2015/16 to 2017/18 of £62M with an initial 2015/16 gap totalling £22.646M.
- 2.5 The Council is facing an unprecedented financial challenge over the next 3 years and all services and their delivery must be assessed. This consultation report relates to the proposal that was put before Cabinet on 10th October, 2014 entitled **Parks and Countryside Service**. The proposal within the Cabinet report is outlined in more detail in section 4. If implemented, the proposals contained in that report would deliver £0.125M of savings per year for the Council.
- 2.6 At the 10th October meeting, Cabinet agreed to proceed to a formal consultation on the proposals. The consultation began on the 21st October and ended on the 16th December, 2014. The following section outlines the methodology used.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The consultation has been conducted in-house. Before beginning the consultation, discussions were held between officers on the most effective approach to take to ensure that everyone who was potentially affected by the service changes would be able to have their say. The process was designed to be open and transparent.

Consultation Materials

- 3.2 The consultation process and letter sent to Sports Clubs, were agreed and the letter and enclosed material was considered to provide clear information in an appropriate and understandable format and invited sports clubs to respond with their views, via email to a specific Sports Pitch Consultation mailbox or via letter or written response to the Freepost address, allowing them the opportunity for any comment/view to be expressed.

The Consultation

- 3.3 The consultation began on the 21st October and ended on the 16th December, 2014

Distribution

- 3.4 The letters were printed in house and the distribution of materials was undertaken by Council couriers and The Royal Mail. Letters were sent to the following:

Table 2. Letters sent to sports clubs in each area

Type of club	Number of letters sent out
Cynon Valley Bowls	9
Cynon Cricket	6
Cynon Winter	48
Rhondda Bowls	16
Rhondda Cricket	6
Rhondda Winter	50
Taff Bowls	7
Taff Cricket	6
Taff Winter	53

- 3.5 201 letters were sent in total to clubs in Rhondda, Cynon and Taf.**

- 3.6 An online web page was created. A web logo box was placed on the front of the website for ease of access. Details of the overall Budget Challenge Consultation was sent out to those Citizens' Panel members with email addresses.
- 3.7 A link to the online page was placed on Social Media. Twitter advertised the consultation, to the Council's 6,000 followers.
- 3.8 A dedicated telephone number was set up in the Council's Contact Centre to deal with any queries and to distribute materials as necessary.
- 3.9 A dedicated email address and free post address were also provided.
- 3.10 All correspondence was dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible, this included acknowledging comments when requested, passing on questions to the relevant services and passing on and working with the complaints department to ensure a timely response and turnaround.

- 3.11 To ensure that all those affected by the proposed changes had the opportunity to attend the Local Engagement sessions, letters were sent to all the registered clubs and representatives of the various leagues.
- 3.12 Local Engagement sessions were held across the Borough to discuss and share views on the proposal as follows;
- Tuesday 25th November - 3pm-6pm - Llantrisant Leisure Centre
 - Wednesday 26th November - 3pm-6pm - Rhondda Fach Sports Centre
 - Thursday 27th November- 3pm-6pm - Sobell Leisure Centre, Aberdare

Feedback forms were also handed out at these sessions for additional comments.

- 3.13 A number of budget challenge sessions were held with young people via School Councils. The young people were given the opportunity to complete the consultation during focus groups held within school times.

Analysis and Report Writing

- 3.14 The analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken by using a standardised coding template, which was developed in line with the main themes identified when reviewing responses as they were received.
- 3.15 All responses were allocated a unique reference number upon receipt. They were then read and coded against the template, using as many codes as necessary. Once coded they were input into a database to record and capture all responses against the coded themes. The hard copies were then ordered and filed.
- 3.16 This report attempts to provide a readable summary of the main issues identified in the responses received. No recommendations are made, the document has been put together impartially and is presented to Cabinet to aid decision making.

Responses Received

- 3.17 There was a large response to the consultation, with the following number of responses received;
- 39 emails (including attachments, such as letters)
 - 10 letters
 - 1 petition received via email, entitled The Death of Sport in RCT (345 signatures)
 - 3 x pre-completed responses:
 - Pre-completed A (75 responses)
 - Pre-completed B (669 responses)

- Pre-completed C (6 responses)
- 9 completed forms given out at public engagement sessions

3.18 The list below shows a selection of the stakeholder groups that submitted letters, emails and forms (at public engagement meetings) to the consultation;

Football Clubs (n = 18)

Bowls Clubs (n = 16)

Cricket Clubs (n = 6)

Rugby (n=4)

Other (n = 3)

Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MPs)

- Christine Chapman (AM)

4. Proposed Sports Pitch Charges

4.1 Area Parks

4.2 The core function of the service is to provide and maintain parks, play areas and sports pitches plus to maintain countryside areas, highways verges and other green spaces throughout the county borough.

4.3 The facilities maintained by the service include 67 football pitches, 38 rugby pitches, 26 Bowling Greens and 15 Cricket Grounds.

The service has a budget of £4.308M.

EXTRACT FROM SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL

4.4 Currently no charge is made by the Council for the use of sports pitches across the County Borough. It is proposed to introduce charges for the use of Bowling Greens, Cricket Grounds and Rugby / Football pitches as follows:

Table 3. Proposed charges for the use of greens, grounds and pitches

Activity	Proposed RCT Annual Charge
<u>Bowls (estimated 22 week season)</u>	
Adults	50
Concessionary	25
<u>Cricket (estimated 18 week season)</u>	
Adult Team	450
Concessionary Team	100
<u>Football / rugby (estimated 34 week season)</u>	
<u>Adults</u>	
First Team	600
Second Team	450
Third and subsequent teams	300
<u>Concessionary</u>	
First Team	100
Second Team	75
Third and subsequent teams	50

(the proposed charges assume no changes are made to current operational management arrangements at any facility and the provision would remain significantly subsidised by the Council)

- 4.5 The Cabinet initiated a consultation with users of the sports facilities on the introduction and level of charges proposed.
- 4.6 Implementation of the full proposals outlined on 10th October would deliver savings for the Council of £0.692M (full year impact) of which £0.125M is from the proposed introduction of charges.

5. GENERAL VIEWS

- 5.1 This section provides a summary of the feedback received on the proposal. It includes letters, emails and the feedback from the engagement sessions.
- 5.2 As stated in the methodology, all responses were considered, coded, input and filed. All of the open responses received have been numbered and filed.
- 5.3 This approach provides a document that is accessible to the reader, as a summary of the main points taken from a wide range of often extensive submissions.
- 5.4 **Open responses (from letters, emails and other materials) were received from 58 individuals. The number of responses totalled 1153.**
- 5.5 The following shows a summary analysis of the open comments received in emails, letters and forms handed in at meetings.

Table 4. Agreement / disagreement with proposal from open comments

	Overall proposal
Agree with a charge being levied	3
Disagree with the principle of charging	7
Disagree with the level of charging	23

- 5.6 As shown above there were a small number of responses in support of the proposed changes;

“Overall we agree with fees proposed by RCT apart from Juniors U18.”

“The proposal of a seasonal charge is a very fair system. All members are prepared to pay such a charge...a one fee charge for bowls would be acceptable.”

“I feel that £50 for adults is fair.”

- 5.7 However, the vast majority of respondents are against the proposal and disagree with the level of charging. The following are some of the comments received;

“Junior Bowls should be exempt from charges.”

“These charges will no doubt have an adverse effect – please review your figures.”

“Cost of running club will be far too excessive to maintain club.”

“I strongly oppose to these changes.”

“I would urge the Council to re-consider these charges...”

5.8 The main responses received from submitted letters, emails and forms handed in at the engagement sessions included the following:

- **Clubs will fold (number = 26)**

26 responses mentioned that clubs could cease to exist if the proposed charges were brought in.

“It will only be a matter of time before it is felt if these planned pitch fees do wipe out some clubs from the Rhondda Cynon Taff area.”

“Football and other sports in Cynon Valley will be decimated, as they just don’t have the capacity to pay.”

- **Disagree with the level of charging (number =23)**

A number of respondents indicated that they were unhappy with the level of charging proposed and not necessarily the charging aspect itself.

“All clubs will have problems with these hiring charges proposed”

“The charges proposed are a huge rise.”

“The proposed charges are excessive.”

- **Negative impact on health, wellbeing & social skills of the youth (number = 19)**

Some responses to the consultation mentioned concern over young people’s health and wellbeing. There appeared to be a growing concern for the possibility of childhood obesity.

“I worry for what the kids would do without sport as a regular activity...sitting at home watching TV or playing the computer. That would lead them to possibly becoming overweight and leading to an increase in childhood obesity.”

“The long-term health benefits of regular exercise and a healthy lifestyle is well documented... it is important to encourage young people to put aside their Playstations and iPhones and participate in regular sporting activities.”

“In a society where obesity in Wales is on the increase, I believe that the charging for the use of pitches etc will only exacerbate obesity issues and will deter our younger generation playing competitive sports, which add so much to the local economy.”

- **Negative impact on health, wellbeing & social skills of the over 60's (number = 8)**

Respondents felt that the proposals would affect older people's health and wellbeing from a social aspect.

“Our club provides a safe and healthy past time to the young of the Village and to the older residents (which assists in promoting a healthy lifestyle).”

- **Value for money (quality of service, extending the season) (number = 18)**

A number of respondents felt that with the introduction of charges, they were entitled to a certain quality of service in return.

“What service(s) will be provided – ground attendance – opening – closing of pavilion – maintenance of playing area – cutting outfield – rolling / cutting of square – preparation and marking of playing strip...”

“Eventually we have had portable changing facilities put there by the Council...we would hope we...do not have to pay the same as other sports teams where parking is provided and facilities are much better.”

- **Equitability over different types of pitches (number = 11)**

Some respondents were concerned over the fairness of proposals over different types of pitches, due to fees and usage.

“The big factor here is that the weekend league fixtures cannot be re-arranged as the ground is not available – unlike fixtures for other sports [football / rugby. We believe that this is another very strong argument on the unfairness of charges against TPCC / other cricket clubs.”

“Believe cricket as a sport is being unfairly dealt with compared charges proposed to the other sports in the consultation papers. The proposals show that cricket is being charged 25% more [annually / weekly than say football / rugby] – yet those sports will play more fixtures AND can replay / re-arrange postponed fixtures within the season – which CANNOT be done by cricket clubs [weekend fixtures]. Clearly this is not a fair or acceptable position from cricket clubs perspective”

“Why are proposed charges for football / rugby clubs more than other sports which may have higher maintenance costs?”

- **Community spirit (lack of it) (number = 9)**

There appeared to be a lot of concern for the local communities.

“These clubs are the hub of the community.”

“Clubs providing football for the community are already providing a regular income stream to RCTCBC, as many will be hiring training facilities for their teams. This current level of income is at risk for RCTCBC as teams being forced to fold will simply mean they no longer require these training sessions - has this been factored in to the projections?”

“Additionally, as Clubs are forced to withdraw, this is likely to have a knock on effect on local businesses within the communities.”

“If LA's are simply looking at the charges as an income stream, then surely is must consider the wider impacts in its community”

“allow us to continue to provide a service to the Community that remains affordable and beneficial for the community”

- **Disagree with the level of charging for junior players (number = 8)**

A number of respondents indicated that they were unhappy with the level of charges for junior players, again due to the fact that many respondents felt it should be free to encourage more sporting activity in the area.

“This charge made for junior teams are disproportionate £100.”

“However, I share the concerns expressed in the letter from the RBBA, and feel that the proposed charge of £25 for Juniors could well provide for the death knell of Junior Bowls in RCT, and see much good work laid waste as a result.”

- **Preference for stepping up charges over medium term (number = 8)**

Some respondents had commented on the fact that they hadn't had to pay charges for a few years and now that they did have to pay, they had concerns over the leap from no charges to the charges proposed. There were many suggestions to 'phase in' the charges over a number of years.

“Could not the charges be phased in over a period of x years?”

“Now the proposed charge of an additional £600 a week for an adult football team, when currently it stands at £0, is by far to great a leap to make in my opinion.”

- **Disagree with the principle of charging (number = 7)**

A number of respondents indicated that they were unhappy with the proposals to bring in charges for sports pitches for various reasons, mainly, being the additional costs to clubs and the concern that clubs would fold.

“These charges will no doubt have an adverse effect – please review your figures.”

“Cost of running club will be far too excessive to maintain club.”

“I strongly oppose to these changes.”

5.9 The other themes emerging from the responses to the proposal were;

- **Impact on out of work users (number = 7)**

A number of respondents indicated that the proposed charges would have a considerable impact on out of work users and those on low income.

“If Concessionary definition is above is accepted then a working person over 60 in receipt of very large salaries would pay £25 whereas a person under 60 as stated above on low wages would be required to pay the full £50.”

“any further increase in charge above the proposed £25 would be unacceptable given the fact that the majority of members who use this outdoor facility are pensioners or of low financial means.”

- **Disagree with the principle of charging for junior players (number = 5)**

Some respondents felt that it was unfair to charge junior players and that it should remain free to encourage children and young people to take up sports and exercise.

“Junior Bowls should be exempt from charges.”

“The same children do not play continuously, and not every day but come and go as children do. To think of charging would dramatically affect this activity.”

- **Inspection regime (number = 5)**

Respondents felt that the Council's inspection regime could be changed and could potentially save more money.

"Why does RCT employ staff to "inspect" pitches on a Saturday and Sunday morning? It is likely that the inspectors are paid overtime to inspect these pitches. Would it not be more apt for the pitches to be inspected on a Friday (towards the end of the day during normal working hours) as is the case with many other areas such as Cardiff?"

- **Disagree with the level of charging for 60+ players (number = 4)**

A number of respondents indicated that they were unhappy with the level of charges proposed for the over 60's. Many had mentioned that some over 60's would be unable to afford the new fees and it would prevent them from continuing with their chosen sport.

"I feel that there should be a reduction for pensioners."

"Some members under age 60 who are working limited number of hours each week and also others who even though working full time are on low wages will find it difficult to pay the full charge of £50."

- **Consideration for team based charge for bowls (number = 4)**

A number of respondents felt that the payment terms and conditions could be reviewed and many suggestions (overall) throughout the consultation were made.

"We feel that a block fee would work better for the bowls clubs in RCT rather than season tickets."

"A block fee per club should be introduced for bowls."

- **Consideration to peppercorn leases (number = 4)**

Some clubs brought up the fact that they had a peppercorn lease and that this needed to be considered when proposing additional charges.

"We would also like clarification of being a leaseholder of 2 football field and investing over £40,000 in this facility, how these proposals will affect our club."

"Our Lease states that only a peppercorn rent will apply to our Club and any charges imposed will break the terms of the Lease"

- **Open to charges based on pitch use (use of each club / amount of times per week used etc) (number = 3)**

Many respondents suggested that they would be more open to charges based on the use of the pitch, to get more value for money as some felt the charges were unfair based on how often and when clubs could actually use the pitch.

“We believe that the proposed level of charge for cricket ground use is over stated and is not a realistic or fair representation against the actual use of the facilities”

“willing to adopt a ‘Pay to Play’ approach. Would suggest a reasonable / fair charge would be £25 per game actually played. Suggest this should be charged / paid retrospectively – from practical perspective.”

- **Inability to pay adhoc fees (rink fees, 3G, Astro turf) (number = 2)**

“Whilst also bringing to your attention that the use of your artificial pitches would decrease significantly if clubs disbanded..meaning any monies saved in one area..would be lost in other areas...such as hire fees for training and friendlies.”

- **Consideration to market rates (number = 2)**

- **Impact on disabled service users (number = 2)**

Respondents were concerned for disabled players and indicated that introducing fees could potentially raise issues.

“Gelligaled is a bowling club that for the past 12 years has catered for all persons with varying degrees of disability without discriminating in any way is keen to continue but the fees will raise issues.”

5.10 The following shows a summary analysis of pre-completed and petition responses. The responses were identical in terms of their comments. The following were received:

Pre-completed responses received

Pre-completed A – Tonyrefail Boys & Girls Football Division (n=75)

Pre-completed B – Opposition to proposed RCT charges (n=669)

Pre-completed C – Porth Harlequins RFC opposition to proposed charges (n=6)

Table 5. Agreement / disagreement with proposal from pre-completed responses and the petition

	Overall proposal
Agree with a charge being levied	0
Disagree with the principle of charging	75
Disagree with the level of charging	675

- 5.11 The vast majority of respondents are against the proposal and disagree with the principle of charging.

Table 6. Themes captured from pre-completed responses

Sports Pitch Charges	TOTAL
Number of Individual Respondents	750
Disagree with the principle of charging	75
Disagree with the level of charging	675
Preference for stepping up charges over medium term	6
Open to charges based on pitch use (use of each club / amount of times per week used etc)	6
Equitability over different types of pitches	6
Negative impact on health, wellbeing & social skills of the youth	750
Negative impact on health, wellbeing & social skills of the over 60's	675
Community spirit (lack of it)	750
Inspection regime	675
Clubs will fold	6
Value for money (quality of service, extending the season)	750
Impact on out of work users	6
Other comments	6

- 5.12 As can be seen from the table above, a high number of respondents (pre-completed responses) felt that value for money was important, including the quality of service, what they would receive from making the payment and whether there was a possibility that the season could be extended.

Again, community spirit (lack of it) was captured after 750 responses mentioned how this could be impacted upon as a result of the proposed charges.

The negative impact on health, wellbeing and social skills of the youth was another big concern to respondents.

Other themes included the inspection regime and the negative impact on health, wellbeing and social skills of the over 60's.

- 5.13 An online petition - **Death of Sport in the R.C.T** was received via an email link with **345** signatures.

Opposition to the proposed charges included:

- **Community spirit (lack of it) – concerns to the community**
- **Disagreement with the principle of charging for junior players**
- **Clubs will fold**
- **Negative impact on health, wellbeing & social skills of the youth**
- **Rates the council is charging for second teams**
- **Payment terms and conditions**

- 5.14 The 3 public engagement sessions were well attended in each area:

Table 7. Number of people who attended engagement sessions

Area	Number of people
Rhondda	22
Cynon	17
Taf	7

- 5.15 The sessions were arranged for those people who may be affected by and had questions about the proposed changes to the sports pitch charges.
- 5.16 The sessions were held in a leisure centre in each area of Rhondda Cynon Taf, and gave people the opportunity to call in over a few hours to ask any questions and talk with relevant officers about any concerns or objections they had. The main points were the same as those already captured in the tables and summary above, although other comments included and related to the following;

- **People from deprived areas and on low income can't afford to pay the fees**
- **Introduce a family ticket for bowls**
- **Pitches aren't used 34 weeks per year**
- **All pitch / ground facilities are different (some have changing facilities and toilets, others do not)**
- **Pitch maintenance is an issue**
- **Some clubs have invested their own money into facilities and now have to pay a charge**
- **Clubs could share facilities to share costs**
- **Clubs are run by volunteers who give up their time**
- **Charge per game – sometimes you can't put a team together as it may change during the season**
- **Discount for a lump sum if paid in full up-front**
- **Obesity in children /young people /health benefits**
- **We pay Council tax – this should be included**
- **Criticism of the standard of field marking**
- **Reduce charges to start with, see how it plays out**
- **Amount the Council is asking for is too much**
- **No consistent charges (different clubs pay different charges based on number of teams / players etc.**
- **Pay per pitch to share costs with other teams who use it**
- **We need to work together with the Council**
- **Match officials should inspect the pitch on a Friday and call off the Saturday game NOT on the day of the game (still have to pay fees, ref etc if the game doesn't go ahead as there is no notice to cancel)**

Comments from the public engagement sessions included:

Charges / knock-on effects

"Clubs will fold."

"Social, youngsters on the street; and they won't return to the clubs in the future."

"Membership in bound to fall."

"Junior price is too high – no new members joining."

"Rugby is going to take a hammering."

"Youngsters will return to the streets."

"Big clubs going from paying nothing to extortionate fees. We're going to lose more money than we're going to gain."

Other ideas

“Clubs with no summer sports – could they use these pitches instead of hiring 3g for pre-season friendlies?”

“Rugby charges per team (£100 first side, £75 2nd and £50 for every one after)...could we look at it per club?”

“Could we charge (bowls) on a team basis rather than individual basis?”

“Look at different pricing strategies – season ticket? Team?”

“What about combining forces?”

“Could clubs ‘club’ together to form a consortium?”

“Staged approach!”

“Means tested rugby pitch charges.”

“Do it in a way that makes it more affordable to clubs, in a way we can raise the money...it was sprung on us and we need time!”

Questions / queries

“How do you monitor who’s playing on the green without a ranger?”

“If groundsmen are taken away, there’ll be no-one to supervise.”

“Are there any set dates? What about the disabled and those on benefits? Low income?”

“Retired members club – would they be included as a team?”

“Registered players – clubs spending more than other clubs.”

“We need more information on concessionary / OAP / unemployed / junior etc.”

“Have the clubs contributed to the Council for facilities?”

Value for money / additional services for additional charges

“Will improvements be made to parks?”

“We’re not getting value for money.”

“Some young people play half rugby, half bowls – is it right to pay full fees when they’re only playing part of the time?”

“Some clubs are paying a lot more because there are different charging entitlements – peppercorn charging / rent.”

“2nd team (rugby) might play for 1 season but might not play again.”

“We were paying less and getting more before.”

“Volunteers work harder and do most of the work than what the Council provides.”

Agree with paying a charge

“Nothing against the charges but they are coming in at one go.”

“People are not opposed to 60+ paying £25.”

“Some people have nothing.”

Disagree with paying a charge

“18 – 60 – opposed to the charges in mind - £50 - £60.”

“Find a more realistic tariff / level.”

“We are already paying out of our own pockets for kids subs.”

“Basically the Council is charging for sports clubs because they have a deficit – no other reason!!”

“We are trying to encourage sport in the area. Are we being penalised?!”

“Don’t make it elitist!”

6. School Council Consultation

- 6.1 This section outlines the findings of a number of youth engagement events with School Councils.
- 6.2 The school sessions were held throughout November and December 2014 and included 6 focus groups of pupils in the School Councils at the following schools:
- Ysgol Llanhari;
 - Treorchy Comprehensive School;
 - Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar;
 - St John Baptist CIW High School;
 - Maesybryn Primary School;
 - Cŵm Clydach Primary School.
- 6.3 Sessions were held during lesson time at each school. A total of **91** pupils took part, 17 from Ysgol Llanhari and 19 from Treorchy, 11 from YGG Aberdar, 12 from St John Baptist, 17 from Maesybryn and 15 from Cwm Clydach. The pupils ranged from age 7-11 years old (**n=43**) and 12-18 years old (**n=48**). Pupils ranged from key stage 2 (Primary Juniors) up to and including key stage 5 (6th Form).
- 6.4 In order to engage with young people the consultation process was similar to the approach used as part of the main consultation within surveys etc., but tailored specifically for children and young people.

Results

6.5 What services do the Council provide?

In order for the participants to get an understanding of what the Council does, they were asked to write on post it notes, what services they think the Council provide. Results were varied, however, encompassed many different services that the participants would see on a daily basis, such as:

Transport, schools, street lighting, refuse and recycling, community buildings, libraries, grass cutting, leisure centres, social care etc.

A total of **283** responses were received.

6.6 **Charging for Sports Pitches - Agree / Disagree.**

The participants were given an introduction to the proposal and asked to stand on a continuum to display how much they agreed with the proposal.

The results were as below:

Agree	Unsure	Disagree
46	35	10

Figure 1

As we can see from the diagram above, the majority of responses were in agreement with the proposal (**51%**, 46 responses). The remaining 45 responses were either unsure (**38%**, 35 responses) or disagreed with the proposal (**11%**, 10 responses).

6.7 Effect on participants and family.

Participants were asked if they thought these proposed changes to charging for sports pitches would have an effect on either themselves or their families.

The results were as below:

Effect	Unsure	No Effect
18	21	52

Figure 2

From the results we can see that, the majority thought that these changes would have no effect on them with 52 responses (**57%**), 21 responses were unsure (**23%**) and the remaining 18 responses (**20%**) thought they would be effected.

6.8 Comments on Sports Pitches

Agreement:

"Takes a lot of time / effort to look after the pitches, it's only a small amount of money"

"It's fair for this cost to fall on families"

"If the council can't afford to do this for free then it's fine to pay"

"Money better spent on other services"

"Clubs can cover this cost from other means"

Disagreement:

"May affect small clubs more and mean clubs have to merge"

"Could mean less people playing sport"

“It’s not fair; we shouldn’t have to pay to play sport”
“If you have lots of brothers and sisters; it could cost more so 50p a week is nothing unless you have more siblings”



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**Medium Term Service Planning:
Service Change Proposals**

**Proposal: Charging for use of sports
pitches**

Equality Impact Assessment

Proposal: Charging for use of sports facilities

1. Purpose of the Initiative

- 1.1 The latest assessment of projections of the Council's revenue budget position for the period to 2017/18 (current financial year 2014/15 and a 3 year projection) indicates an estimated budget gap over the next 3 years of £62 million, with an initial gap in 2015/16 of £22.6 million (after taking into account decisions made up to and including the 10th October 2014 Cabinet and as reported to Council on the 29th October 2014).
- 1.2 The changes outlined in this proposal are required as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements (specifically to reduce spend and enable the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibility and set a balanced budget).

2. The General Duty

- 2.1 Under the Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), public authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3. **Introduction: Proposal on charging for use of sports facilities**

3.1 The proposed option agreed by Cabinet on the 10th October 2014 for consultation was to introduce charges for the use of some sports facilities in the County Borough, as follows:

Activity	Proposed RCT Annual Charge £	Proposed RCT weekly charge £
<u>Bowls (estimated 22 week season)</u>		
Adults	50.00	2.27
Concessionary	25.00	1.14
<u>Cricket (estimated 18 week season)</u>		
Adult Team	450.00	25.00
Concessionary Team	100.00	5.56
<u>Football / rugby (estimated 34 week season)</u>		
Adults		
First Team	600.00	17.65
Second Team	450.00	13.24
Third and subsequent teams	300.00	8.82
Concessionary		
First Team	100.00	2.94
Second Team	75.00	2.21
Third and subsequent teams	50.00	1.47

3.2 The Cabinet report, dated 10th October 2014, states that "proposed charges assume no changes are made to current operational management arrangements at any facility and the provision would remain significantly subsidised."

3.3 The following assessment considers what potential impact the proposal could have on protected groups.

4. **What evidence is there to suggest the potential impact of the proposal on protected groups?**

4.1 **Consultation & Engagement**

4.1.1 Following Cabinet approval, a public consultation was launched on the proposals, which included a letter being sent to the affected sports facilities and local engagement events. The consultation was closed on the 16th December 2014. A separate consultation report on the methodology and outcomes of the consultation has been produced and is attached with these papers.

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4.1.2 A number of different themes were raised during the consultation, from many different types of clubs, facilities and members of the public. There were some themes that relate to groups of the population potentially being disproportionately affected by the proposal, such as applying charges for young people and the possible negative impacts on health for both young people and people over the age of 60 years old. These themes have been considered in preparing this Equality Impact Assessment to meet the duty (as set out in Section 2).

4.2 Other evidence gathered

4.2.1 Evidence has been gathered from a number of sources, used to determine the level of relevance the proposal has to the protected groups covered by the equality duty and explore the potential impacts of the proposal further, having due regard to the need to promote equality and minimise any possible adverse impacts.

4.2.2 In line with feedback from consultation, and other evidence gathered, the following assessment has been taken:

4.3 Could the proposal impact on protected groups covered by the general duty?¹

Protected Group	Could this proposal impact on this group differently from others in RCT?	Could this proposal promote equal opportunities for this group?
<i>Age</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Disability</i>	Yes	No
<i>Gender assignment</i>	No	No
<i>Marriage / civil partnership</i>	No	No
<i>Pregnancy / maternity</i>	No	No
<i>Race</i>	No	No
<i>Religion / belief</i>	No	No
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	No	No
<i>Sex (gender)</i>	No	No

4.3.1 The next sections consider the potential impacts the proposal could have on protected groups covered by the general duty, using evidence gathered through engagement, consultation and research.

¹ (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010)

What potential impacts could the proposal have on protected groups covered by the general duty?

5. Protected Group: Age

- 5.1 Although the proposal includes discount rates for young people and older people (concessionary rates), consultation respondents still expressed concern that the groups most affected by this proposal would be young people and older people and some disagreed with proposals on this basis.
- 5.2 The main themes within the consultation relating to age included disagreeing with the proposal because of the possible social impact it could have on the community, particularly children, young people and older adults. Respondents also disagreed with charging because it could discourage children and young people from taking up a sport; it could be a financial burden on some older people and making links with the proposal and the possible impact on the health and wellbeing of children, young people and the elderly. The following sections will explore these themes with regards to protected groups.
- 5.3 Children and young people were consulted both as part of the general consultation with the public and specifically through face-to-face meetings with School Councils (see consultation report for more information). 51% of children and young people within School Councils agreed with the proposal to charge for the use of sports pitches; 38% were unsure; and 11% disagreed.
- 5.4 57% of children and young people said the proposal would have no impact on them or their family. Of those that disagreed with the proposal and felt it would impact upon them, they stated that:
- *"(It) could mean less people playing sport."*
 - *"If you have lots of brothers and sisters; it could cost more so 50p a week is nothing unless you have more siblings."*

5.5 POTENTIAL IMPACT ON CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

- 5.5.1 The equality duty covers the protected characteristic of age, which refers to a person having a particular age (for example, 32 year olds) or being within an age group (for example, 18-30 year olds). This includes all ages, including children and young people.
- 5.5.2 The consultation results suggested that the proposal could impact disproportionately on children and young people, up to 18 years old; particularly linked to attracting children and young people into engaging with sport and creating a sporting legacy for the area. Concerns were raised that an upfront cost for children, young people or their parents was a disincentive to getting them involved in the sport, as they tended not to be constant members of the club. Respondents also felt that charging for use of sport facilities would discourage parents and carers from allowing their child to play because of the cost.

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- 5.5.3 If the proposal was to have this effect, the sporting legacy of the area could be damaged and the wider benefits of playing sport for children and young people (such as health and social benefits) could be threatened.
- 5.5.4 The impact of the proposal on children and young people's wellbeing was raised during the consultation as a negative aspect of charging for use of sports facilities. There is clear evidence to show how beneficial sport is for mental and physical health.² This is particularly the case for children and young people, due to the need to keep active to develop muscle and bone density; and to develop social skills such as leadership, respect and team-work.
- 5.5.5 The proposal will not remove access to sports facilities, which mitigates against some of the concerns raised within the consultation regarding children and young people.
- 5.5.6 Should Cabinet agree the proposal, mitigation will be put in place through concessionary charging for children and young people.

5.6 **POTENTIAL IMPACT ON OLDER PEOPLE.**

- 5.6.1 The consultation results also suggested that the proposal could impact disproportionately on older people, both in terms of impact on wellbeing and affordability of charges for older people to play sport.
- 5.6.2 Respondents raised that older people are more likely to be living in poverty and, therefore, paying to use sports pitches would be a further strain on their finances.
- 5.6.3 The consultation responses linked this with a decline in older people playing sports, which could have a negative impact on their social and physical wellbeing. Keeping active is advised for older people to avoid injury, illness and many respondents stated that attending a club is an important part of their social life.
- 5.6.4 A mitigation relating to the protected characteristic of 'age' is that concessionary charges (discount for children, young people and older adults) have been proposed. The principle of concessionary charging is to promote equality, as it is intended to provide opportunities for groups of the population with less disposable income to take part.

6. **Protected Group: Disability**

- 6.1 Some comments were made during the consultation around the affordability of the charges for individuals and families on low incomes or claiming benefits. People on low incomes and / or claiming benefits are not a specific protected group under the duty, but comments made included reference to disabled people, which are a protected group under the duty.
- 6.2 The consultation identified concerns around the effect of charging for facilities on the participation of disabled people in sport. Around a third of disabled adults aged

² See, for example, NHS guidelines <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/Whybeactive.aspx>

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25-65 years old are living in low income households, which is twice the rate as that for non-disabled adults.³ Therefore, introducing service charges could have a negative impact on this group.

7. How could the potential impact on protected groups be mitigated?

- 7.1 Where individuals or families seek support or advice around affordability and budgeting, the Council can assist through referral to services such as Communities First and Citizens Advice Bureau.
- 7.2 Clubs that have concerns over the participation of disabled people, as raised in the consultation, can also seek advice from 'Sport RCT', which has a dedicated Disability Sports Officer.
- 7.3 With regards to wider mitigation, it should be noted that many clubs or societies already charge members a small amount. Therefore, some people will be familiar with paying their club to participate. For instance, the 'MoreCard' is a membership scheme, whereby individuals pay a fee to participate in sport and / or use facilities. Concessionary charging is applied to membership fees for students, Old Age Pensioners and those receiving certain benefits. A disabled person claiming benefits would be entitled to the maximum level of concessionary discount within the 'MoreCard' scheme.
- 7.4 Consultation respondents were in favour of stepping up charges over the medium-term, in order to mitigate against up-front costs and discouraging people (particularly young people) from joining the club. Other suggestions to mitigate the proposal, such as alternative charging models (season tickets / charging per individual / charging per use) were also suggested.
- 7.5 Furthermore, officers could offer advice and support to clubs that are concerned about charging players and the sustainability of the club.
- 7.6 Introducing a consistency of charging could promote further equality of opportunity for teams of all ages, as some currently charge for certain aspects, whereas others do not.
- 7.7 Should the proposal be agreed, impacts on protected groups should be monitored by the Leisure Services Division, through engagement with clubs. Any further identified impacts should be acted upon if reasonably practicable.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 In line with the General Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), this Equality Impact Assessment has:

³ The Poverty Site - a UK website that monitors social exclusion and poverty statistics. (2010 figures)
<http://www.poverty.org.uk/40/index.shtml>

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- Assessed specific differential impacts that have been identified for each of the protected characteristics;
- Stated where actions can be considered to minimise or remove any potential negative impacts relating to the proposals;
- Provided opportunities, where applicable, to advance equality and good relations between different groups.

8.2 As such, this Equality Impact Assessment has provided evidence to demonstrate that due regard has been given to the 'duty' placed on the Council in this respect and set out any grounds based on equality considerations that should be considered as part of the decision on service change proposals in respect of charging for use of sports facilities.

8.3 If a decision is taken to implement some or all of the options put forward within the proposal, implementation arrangements will need to have full regard to equality planning requirements, thus ensuring efforts is made to mitigate any negative impacts and promote equality, where possible.
