

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

12 November 2015

Report by Director of Environment

FOOTBALL PITCH LETS (ALLOCATION POLICY)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the Cabinet on an Allocation Policy for Football Pitch Lets (Appendix 1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the revised football pitch lets allocation policy as outlined in Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND

3. On 21 November 2013 the Cabinet agreed the following recommendations in relation to a football pitch allocation policy due to drawbacks with the current approach and criticisms from users:-

- (a) All current lets to be retained for a period of 2 years*;
- (b) The Head of Environment (Roads and Environmental Services) and the Head of Education Services to draw up a pitch lets policy to present to Cabinet for approval taking into consideration the Scottish FA Quality Mark scheme and to complete this task within 2 years; and
- (c) The new lets policy to commence for the beginning of the 2016/17 season to allow clubs to prepare for new quality requirements.

* All vacated lets during this period, and lets which become available would be allocated on current criteria.

4. The Council currently allocates football pitch lets on a historical basis, and in general each team occupying a particular let will be given first refusal in the following season.

5. The Council has a high demand for pitches and is struggling to accommodate all requests from clubs / teams.

REPORT

6. In order to increase customer satisfaction the Parks Service consulted widely with service users, and 60 letters were sent to individual clubs, which incorporate 153 teams for their feedback. The consultation requested clubs/teams to feedback on the Council's proposal for a new Policy on pitch. The consultation considered the following aspects of the letting policy:

- Current and future letting availability
- League structures, and playing times – including days and kick- offs
- Training lets
- Scottish Football Association guidance
- Quality Mark
- External (teams out with the Council Boundary) letting
- The continuing support and development of ERSDA (East Renfrewshire Soccer Development Association)

7. In consideration of the feedback received, there were strong views from some of the clubs, particularly those who only operate one or two teams, that attaining SFA Quality Mark would affect their ability to continue on as teams. In recognition of this the Council has reduced the need for all teams to attain this charter.

8. The significant proposed changes to our current allocation policy are as follows:

- All teams from four-a-side up to and including the “nineteen’s” age group level must have achieved or commenced the SFA Quality Mark. This is to ensure that ERC are aligned with the national direction of travel with respect to coaching and playing of football at these age groups.
- Teams progressing from seven-a-side football to eleven-a-side football will be given priority to any available eleven-a-side pitches. This is to ensure players and coaches remain on the SFA pathway.
- When all venues have been allocated using the priority basis, any remaining lets will be allocated by way of ballot. This is deemed the fairest way of allocating lets, as adding more criteria will simply result in more disputes.

9. It should be noted that the Parks service currently are accommodating all let requests in 2015/16 and it is hoped that this will still be the case for season commencing 2016/17. It is important therefore that this policy is in place to protect the Council’s interests should over capacity become an issue in future years as clubs continue to grow exponentially.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

10. There are no financial implications related to this report.

CONSULTATION

11. All clubs registered with the service were sent a consultation document. The views expressed helped to inform the final policy document.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

12. The Education Department’s Sports Development Team were consulted throughout this process.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

13. There are no staffing, legal, IT or equality implications relating to this proposal.

CONCLUSIONS

14. The allocation process for football pitches and training lets will be better served by the formation of a clear policy and one which provides a fairer and more equitable allocation of pitches taking into consideration the Scottish FA Quality Mark Scheme and maximises the use of current facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the revised football pitch lets allocation policy as outlined in Appendix 1.

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from -Donnie McManus, Parks and Cemeteries Manager, 0141 577 3915, e-mail: donnie.mcmanus@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Football Pitch Lets Policy Cabinet Report 21st November 2013

KEY WORDS

Football, Pitch Lets, Policy

PROPOSED FOOTBALL PITCH LETS (ALLOCATION POLICY)
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

The criteria for pitch allocation of Football Pitches and Training venues are as follows:

1. All groups/teams/clubs/organisations wishing to make use of East Renfrewshire Council's outdoor sports pitch facilities must be registered under the Council's Registration Scheme, which is free of charge.
2. Teams must be registered with a local or national association in order to apply for Council lets. (One off requests e.g. gala/charity day matches will be exempt and the small five a side pitches e.g. Woodfarm Cages will be available to groups if there are no clubs/teams taking up these lets and they are lying vacant).
3. All teams from four a side up to and including nineteen's age group level must have achieved or commenced the Scottish Football Association Quality Mark and evidence must be submitted to the council confirming this to qualify for lets. Amateur teams and under twenty one level teams do not need to have the SFA Quality Mark but are encouraged to work towards it.
4. Teams will continue to play and train at their current venues and these venues will be deemed their home pitch and training venue as long as the team are in existence.

NB Allocation of these venues will be set from season 2016/17 on existing 2015/16 allocations, unless teams advise that they no longer require these venues.

5. Requests from teams to change their venue will not be permitted unless a venue has been vacated by another team or a new venue has been constructed.
6. Teams progressing from seven a side football to eleven-a-side will be given priority to any available eleven-a-side pitches, as long as their affiliated club has achieved SFA Quality Mark. In the likelihood that there are more teams than venues a ballot will be held to see who is allocated a pitch.
7. When all venues have been allocated to developing teams (from 7-a-side to 11-a-side football) any remaining lets will be offered to other teams who have applied for a venue and have achieved SFA Quality Mark. In the event that there are still more teams than venues following this process then a ballot will be held to see who is allocated the remaining lets.
8. Pitches will be allocated on a season long basis to teams, not clubs.
9. Where venues become available part way through the season the Council will look to allocate these to teams who have registered interest at the beginning of the season.

10. Any club/team seeking additional venues/facilities must in advance of registering with a league association consult with the Parks Section to find out if there are pitches available for matches on their designated day. The council will not be held responsible should teams sign up for a league but there are no pitches available.
11. Teams who book a pitch and fail to turn up for a match on more than three consecutive occasions and do not notify the Council of a cancellation, will be charged full price on each occasion and after a third non appearance will have their pitch taken from them and allocated to another team.
12. A date will be set annually for the pitch application process. Late applications will only be considered once all other allocations have been made, including allocations of pitches to new teams.
13. Applications from teams who have an outstanding debt will not be considered.

Any new/additional pitches provided by the Authority will be allocated on the basis of assessment of need and requirements of interested clubs as outlined in this policy.

The Council will retain the right at any time to refuse or cancel a booking or to review its booking policy.