

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17 FEBRUARY 2015

PRINCES PARK

Ward: Brent

1. Summary

1.1 The Chairman has requested an update on the lease and Service Level Agreements between the Council and Dartford Football Club.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the contents of the report be noted.

3. Background and Discussion

3.1 Lease

The lease for Dartford Football Club (covering the whole of Princes Park with the exception of the mini pitches) was completed in March 2012 and will expire on 31 January 2034.

3.2 Service Level Agreement for community facilities (excluding the mini pitches)

The initial SLA was signed alongside the lease in March 2012. The SLA was for the period February 2009 to March 2012.

A new five year agreement is now in place which ends in March 2017. Under the agreement, the contribution made by the Council reduces from £135,000 to £90,000 by 2015/16.

Under the terms of the SLA, Dartford Football Club is required:

- To provide community access to the golf course for no less than 300 days each year. This excludes days when the golf course cannot be used due to bad weather or other exceptional circumstances outside the control of Dartford Football Club. The dates and times of availability are to be determined by Dartford Football Club in consultation with the Council.
- To provide community access to the training pitch for a minimum of two weekday evenings for each week of each year. For this purpose, "community" excludes teams in any way associated with Dartford Football Club.

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- To provide general community access to the bar and function facilities and advertise availability.
- To promote (and support the Council in) sports development generally, by providing specialised training and development courses. This is subject to normal commercial considerations

The following provide some details of usage:

Gate attendances: July 2014 to January 2015: 23,030 - includes 4,070 at pre-season friendlies.

Golf usage: 1,318 pay on gate rounds and 1,041 rounds by members/loyalty card holders from April 1st 2014 to January 28th 2015.

Dartford Football Club has continued to run a loyalty scheme where golfers pay for 5 rounds of golf and get their 6th round free. The golf course is advertised on the Dartford Football Club Website, Facebook and Twitter pages, periodically in the programme and has been advertised in local magazine Dartford Living. An Advertising Board has also been erected pitch side within the stadium to further promote the Golf Course.

As of July 2013, Dartford Football Club has had a ground share agreement with Greenwich Borough FC. This agreement has now been extended to a two year contract meaning that they will play on alternate Saturday afternoons and Tuesday evenings when Dartford Football Club are not until the end of the 2015/16 season.

The club run 2 Academy teams in which the players have the opportunity to progress into our First Team. Dartford Football Club also runs 35 youth teams across various sections:

U7s – U18s in the Junior Section

U16s - U18s in the Kent Youth League

U8s – U16s in the Pre-Academy

In October 2014, Dartford Football Club invited a number of local primary schools football teams, both boys and girls, to take part in a tournament throughout the day.

Along with the football, Princes Park is also regularly used by:

Princes Park Catering/BiteMe Catering regularly hold functions in the two suites upstairs where those attending are able to look through the windows into the stadium, along with seeing promotional content displayed around the stadium. Their regular hirers include:

Baby Ballet every Monday; classes are held from 9am til lunch time

Tango and Salsa Dance lessons every Wednesday evening

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Monthly Business Network events are held including conferences and breakfast meetings

Seeds Cycling Club continues to meet at Princes Park Stadium, the starting point for the club's rides, approximately 3 times a week throughout the year.

Dartford Road Runners continue to use the facilities at Princes Park 3 times a week. They hold periodical events at the stadium including Les Witton 10k road race.

New to the club:

Included in the Dartford Football Club Pre-Academy this season is 3 girls teams at ages U13-U15 which will continue to develop into older age groups and introduce younger girls teams as the seasons progress.

Millwall Football Club has been using Princes Park Stadium to play their U21 fixtures.

In July 2014, a local charity hired the Stadium for their Tottenham Hotspurs stars and celebrities versus Arsenal Foundation fixture. The game was in aid of the Stacey Mowle Appeal, a little girl who is suffering with Neuroblastoma and needs £500,000 for her required treatment abroad. Princes Park welcomed many well-known faces on the day of the match such as Linda Robson, Tamera Foster, Micky Hazard, Terry Alderton, Sam Callahan and Tommy Walsh to name a few.

Dartford Football Club were approached by Premier League and asked if they could use Princes Park Stadium for their newly established International Cup. In October 2014 the club hosted Schalke U21s v Benfica U21s and in January 2015 hosted Celtic U21s v Villarreal U21s. They are keeping Princes Park in mind for any future fixtures that may arise.

3.3 Mini Pitches

The service level agreement for the mini pitches was completed on 5 September 2011. It lasted for one year and was extended for a further year on the same terms. Because of the grant from the Football Foundation, which part funded the build of the mini pitches, the Council has to account for all income and expenditure.

A new agreement was authorised by Cabinet on 3 April 2014 (Min.No 148). The main changes related to the financial arrangements with the other provisions remaining.

Under the SLA Dartford Football Club is required (in summary):

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- To provide all day to day management of the two mini soccer pitches.
- To actively market and promote the facilities and opportunities.
- To provide adequate ground keeping functions.

Under the SLA:

- An annual fee of £20,000 subject to CPI each year (based on previous September), rounded down to a whole amount.
- Pitch fees to increase by CPI, rounded down to a whole amount (or alternative if both the Council and Dartford Football Club agree) at the start of each football season.
- 15% of income (net of VAT) to be paid into a refurbishment reserve; subject to this producing no worse than a break even position.
- Any surplus to be shared 50/50 between the Council and Dartford Football Club.

Mini Pitch bookings have shown a further increase on the 2013 figures, with increases each quarter. Bookings reached a value of £11,561 for October-December 2014 compared to £9,487 in the same quarter for last year. This is due to an increase in block bookings and new hirers using the facility whilst there has been a decrease in the requirement for 'one off casual' bookings. Hirers feel that they are being offered an excellent facility and value for money.

Looking forward, the income will plateau as the mini pitches are near to full capacity for evening hire between 6pm to 10pm. There are regular enquiries being received asking to be informed if a cancellation becomes available.

The focus and priority of the mini pitches is to cater for juniors and youths, and as a result a waiting list has been created of male adult and veteran teams wishing to use the facilities.

Advertising for the pitches has been distributed via large posters in the Civic Centre/Princes Park; Council poster sites in the town centre and match day programmes; Summer Sizzler brochure; and via the Council and Dartford Football Club websites. As part of the ongoing marketing for the pitches, Dartford Football Club have added mailshot details to their database contacts and have continued to promote on Facebook and Twitter.

AFC Halls have held their second mini holiday camp in the Easter break. The holiday club focuses on technique, instruction, team spirit, fun and fitness, including a fun work shop at the start of the session and football quiz at the end of each day.

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Dartford Football Club was approached again to host Bexley Invicta Spring Tournament. Invicta FC is open to all, regardless of sexuality, ability or experience and offers the opportunity for players to play football in a gay friendly setting.

Dartford Football Club Youth and pre-academy continue to grow, with a number of girls' teams joining under the club's umbrella.

Kent FA district teams sessions are held on the mini-pitches. They work closely with local schools and are proving an excellent way to profiling the pitches and clubhouse.

Dartford Football Club is currently in discussions with interested parties, concerning development of training sessions on the pitches during the daytime.

Dartford Football Club Grounds Team continues to maintain the mini pitches to a good standard. Additional security has been added to the entrance gates to resolve unauthorised usage of the pitches. New nets and fixings, additional signage and a litter bin are on order to maintain the quality of the facility.

3.4 Cost to the Council

In 2008/9 it cost the Council £158,000 to operate Princes Park. The grant payable to Dartford Football Club in 2013/14 was £110,000. The new agreement will see this reducing to £90,000 for 2015/16.

The net income from the mini pitches has improved year on year and the figure for the 2014/15 past three quarters is £24,928.66 compared with the same period in 2013/14 of £20,389.58.

3.5 Facility

There have been some ongoing issues concerning the functioning of the roof at the stadium, but the current situation is that the contractor has accepted liability. A specification has been agreed by the Council and we are awaiting the final legal agreement and timescales.

4 Relationship to the Corporate Plan

Not applicable

5 Financial, legal, staffing and other administrative implications and risk assessments

Financial Implications	None specifically from this report
Legal Implications	None specifically from this report
Staffing Implications	None

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Administrative Implications	None
Risk Assessment	None specifically from this report

6. Details of Exempt Information Category

Not applicable

7. Appendices

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
		Stephen Jefferson	Policy & Corporate Support	N/A