

---

**Report to Council**

---

**Date of Meeting: 22 August 2019**

---

**Subject: Empowering our Communities**

---

**Report by: Strategic Director, Partnership & Performance**

---

**1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. As agreed by Council on 6 March 2019, the purpose of this report is to seek agreement on a number of further innovations to support and empower our communities, including dynamic pricing arrangements.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1. It is recommended that Council:
- 2.1.1. Notes, challenges and comments on the contents of this report;
- 2.1.2. Agrees that the innovations proposed at paragraph 3.6 should be implemented on trial basis during 2019/20;
- 2.1.3. Notes proposals (as per paragraph 3.9) for the disbursement of £30,000 agreed by Council in March 2019 to support community groups that have recently taken on the management of former Council facilities
- 2.1.4. Agrees to make consequential amendments to the Council's Income and Charging Strategy and Register of Charges.

**3.0 Considerations**

- 3.1. This paper seeks to develop further innovations that will enable improved access to services for our communities and enhance community empowerment as part of a developing policy framework aligned with the Council's vision and priorities, in particular, Empowering Families and Communities. It is recognised that this is another step on a journey rather than a destination. As referenced on other papers in today's agenda, work is underway on a holistic policy approach that aims to empower families and communities, placing them at the heart of service design and decision making.

- 3.2. On 6 March 2019, Council agreed to bring forward a dynamic pricing strategy to the meeting of Council in June 2019 on the understanding that this could vary the Register of Income and Charging Rates for 2019/20. This was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, however, it is now presented to Council for it to consider.
- 3.3. The Council's Charging Policy has seen a number of incremental changes over the years in response to feedback from elected members, officers and service users. Whilst the policy principle of aiming to recover the full cost of providing discretionary services to ensure that costs are covered by the charges made is well established, as more community groups become involved in the management of facilities, there is a growing case for further modifications.

### **Empowering Communities**

- 3.4. The Charging Policy agreed by Council in March 2019 acknowledged that further flexibility was needed to build community empowerment and support for recognised community groups. For example, for non-commercial community groups, the policy incorporated significantly reduced rates for Park Event bookings and Price on Application rates for partial park hire to better support smaller scale community events.
- 3.5. Whilst these developments are welcomed, feedback indicates that there are a number of areas where further innovation is required to support and empower non commercial recognised community groups. These are:
  - Increased influence over the booking of land adjacent to community-run facilities. For example, sports pitch bookings. The complication for end users arises where, instead of being able to book a pitch (booking through the Council) and changing facilities (booking through the community group) at one time, separate bookings for each are required. This unanticipated consequence of community asset transfer has led to instances where the pitch was booked but the changing facilities were subsequently found to be unavailable and vice versa.
  - The Council's policy is clear that concessionary rates should apply for community councils, charities, pensioners groups, and parent & toddler groups, out of school care groups and other properly constituted, non profit-making clubs and societies. There are a small number of events each year that are community-minded but have commercial aspects to them where a clear policy steer from Council would be helpful. For example, Alloa firework display, run on a commercial basis by Alloa Round Table though essentially to provide an established and valued 'community service' that would otherwise not take place.
  - Further flexibility over the requirement to pay a bond for Park Events. Whilst the introduction of bond charges has undoubtedly been successful in reducing losses and damage to public open space during commercial events, even with concessionary rates, bonds can be challenging for community groups, where cash flow is often marginal.

- Community Empowerment Fund – for a number of years the Council has agreed a capital grant fund of approximately £100,000 that community groups can bid into either to improve the fabric of community run facilities or for community council's to use for local participatory budgeting exercises. The fund has been popular, with numerous community buildings benefitting from upgrades and modernisation. However, current criteria is somewhat restricted by a requirement for security of tenure, and there appears to be little appetite within communities to repeat participatory budgeting exercises piloted a few years ago. Fledgling community groups have found it particularly frustrating not to have been able to access the funds either to upgrade a facility in order that they can take it on its management, or, if they have taken it on, because they are not quite in a position to commit to a long term lease.

### **Dynamic Charging – Increasing Use of Council Community Facilities**

- 3.6. In the context of the Council's leisure and community services, there is a case for a more innovative, dynamic, and indeed, commercial approach with charging to encourage increased community uptake and, in turn, revenue. For example, the current charging policy is for a fee, set annually as part of the budget, over which there is no operational discretion. In a commercial context, providers often have flexibility to offer last minute discounted rates to maximise usage on the basis that costs are fixed, therefore a proportion of income for an asset is better than none at all.

### **Proposed Innovations**

- 3.7. In order to address these issues a number of innovations are proposed as follows:
- 3.7.1. Sports Pitch Bookings Adjacent to Community Operated Facilities – it is proposed that the Council agrees on a trial basis to provide officer discretion to transfer the booking process and associated income to recognised community groups that wish to do so for a trial period. There would still be a requirement for close liaison with the Council staff on regulatory matters relating to licencing maintenance, and adhering to the Council's terms and conditions; however, this would provide a more joined-up solution for service users and communities, providing opportunities for increased community empowerment and in turn increased usage of community facilities.
- 3.7.2. This would mean a loss of income for the Council of around £1000 per annum; however, this would be offset to some extent by opportunity cost associated with bookings and failure demand. At this stage, it would apply to 2 facilities: Dumyat Centre (current income approximately £700 per annum) and Tullibody Civic Centre (current income approximately £350 per annum). Total income for sport pitch booking is £4,500 per annum, with the majority realised from West End Park, Alloa.
- 3.7.3. Requirement for Bonds for Community Councils and Development Trusts – it is proposed that discretion is given to officers for a trial period not to charge a bond fee for these groups on the basis that it is in the interests of both parties that the amenity value of public parks is maintained. The Council would conduct an inspection before and after the event to ensure no damage has

occurred. In the event of damage, it would be a condition that it is made good. This changes recognises that these groups may not have the fund up front to enter into a bond.

- 3.7.4. Dynamic Pricing – it is proposed that a dynamic pricing approach is adopted for a trial period during 2019/20 for Indoor Sports Facilities and Conference and Meeting Facilities to gauge whether it would realise increased revenue. This would provide officers with discretion to run targeted campaigns that could reduce fees of a facility which has not been booked already by up to 50% no more than 48 hours ahead of usage.
- 3.7.5. Concessionary rates – in this context it is merely proposed that the Council sets out a clear policy position on events such as the Alloa Firework display in that where a non-commercial group can demonstrate that any funds raised in connection with that event are returned to the direct benefit of the community in Clackmannanshire, then concessionary rates will apply.
- 3.7.6. Community Empowerment Fund – at present, the fund is open to applications from community groups that have long-term security of tenure and community councils to run participatory budgeting events. It is proposed that the Fund is extended to applications from constituted community groups who have taken on the running of properties still owned by the Council, at which location the Council previously provided leisure or community services irrespective of the length of tenure. Furthermore, it is proposed that applications are welcomed from constituted community groups to upgrade poorly used or surplus former Council leisure or community facilities so that the group could take over the management of the facility through a lease or Community Asset Transfer arrangement. The group would need to take legal control of the facility before work could commence, however, informal feedback to date suggest that an ability for community groups to access a small capital start up fund may assist to bring more facilities into community use.
- 3.7.7. Any award of grant would be in line with statutory regulations on the award of Capital grant to third parties and the definition of capital expenditure and subject to the Councils own terms and conditions as specified in the grant offer.
- 3.8. In line with the Council's vision, values and priorities, a key strand of our organisational transition programme, *Be the Future*, will seek to empower our communities. An important element of that will be how the Council and partners can better work with in partnership with communities and community groups. It is envisaged that a learning and development programme will accompany this work, to upskill communities and deliver a culture shift within the Council that can better support a more holistic policy approach to community empowerment.

### **Risks**

- 3.9. These innovations provide opportunities to increase satisfaction with and usage of our community facilities, however, there is also a risk that the Council may lose income or incur increased costs. For example, income from sports facilities could fall below that predicted in the budget, or unintended damage to open spaces may exceed planned budget.

- 3.10. Although these risks are believed to be low, it is proposed at this stage that the proposals are trialled during 2019/20 to inform budget for 2020/21 and beyond.

### **Update on Revenue Funding for Community Groups**

- 3.11. On 6 March, Council agreed that a fund of £30,000 should be created to support community groups that have taken on the running of council community facilities. Following a period of informal consultation, it would appear that a simple split of £6,000 per facility is the favoured approach at this time to assist fledgling groups with developing projects and initial cash flow concerns for items such as utility bills and minor repairs. Guidance and a simple application form seeking information on what the funds will be used for will be distributed to applicable groups which are as follows: Alva Development Trust (Cochrane Hall), Clackmannan Development Trust (former Clackmannan CAP), Tullibody Community Development Trust (Tullibody Civic Centre) , Dollar Development Trust (Dollar Civic Centre) and Menstrie Community Action Group (Dumyat Centre). A monitoring process will be used to ensure the funds are used for the purposes intended.

### **Conclusions**

- 3.12. Further innovations are required in the way the Council works in partnership with our communities as part of a developing policy approach. Whilst there are risks of lost revenue and increased costs, these are believed to be low and potentially outweighed by opportunities for greater collaboration and innovation and increased usage and satisfaction of much valued facilities within our communities.

## **4.0 Sustainability Implications**

- 4.1. The recommendations in this report provide opportunities for community empowerment and to increase the sustainability of community facilities.

## **5.0 Resource Implications**

### *5.1. Financial Details*

- 5.2. The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. Yes

- 5.3. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

### *5.4. Staffing*

## **6.0 Exempt Reports**

- 6.1. Is this report exempt? Yes  (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

## 7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

### (1) Our Priorities (Please double click on the check box )

- Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all
- Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life
- Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential
- Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

### (2) Council Policies (Please detail)

## 8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes  No

## 9.0 Legality

9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

## 10.0 Appendices

10.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

None

## 11.0 Background Papers

11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes  (please list the documents below) No

**Author(s)**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DESIGNATION</b>	<b>TEL NO / EXTENSION</b>
Stuart Crickmar	Strategic Director Partnership & Performance	2127

**Approved by**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DESIGNATION</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
Stuart Crickmar	Strategic Director Partnership & Performance	
Nikki Bridle	Chief Executive	

