

REPORT FOR INFORMATION BULLETIN

Subject:	Elmbridge Parks Tennis Update
Lead Officer:	Tennis Development Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Janet Turner, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture
Link to Council Priorities:	Covid-19 recovery, Strategic representation and community leadership, Council Budgets
Exempt information:	None
Delegated status:	For Information

PURPOSE:

This report provides a review of the Parks Tennis scheme for the past year 1st April 2021 to the 31st March 2022.

BACKGROUND :

1. The Elmbridge Parks Tennis scheme was re-launched on the 1st April 2021 following the decision to re-introduce a chargeable membership and pay & play across the Council's tennis court facilities. The new Parks Tennis scheme introduced membership options, a booking system and gate technology which has improved the playing experience and ability to book court time.

Membership

2. The annual household Play Tennis Pass costs £36 and 1,372 passes have been sold resulting in 3,323 individual members.
3. Players not wishing to purchase the annual Play Tennis Pass can access the courts on a pay & play basis, which is charged at £5 per hour, per court.
4. Collectively the two schemes have generated £58,036 for the Council which have enabled the tennis community development programme to be successfully delivered.
5. As part of the upgraded Parks Tennis scheme free Play Tennis Passes are also provided to people in receipt of low-income benefits. To date this has attracted 33 members and the Tennis Development Officer continues to promote this.

Marketing

6. As part of the re-launch the Parks Tennis branding and communication was reviewed and upgraded to ensure that the membership passes and booking process were clearly understood.

- The on-court banners and social media posts were re-designed, and the websites were redesigned to update all information to communicate the Parks Tennis scheme clearly and effectively.

Court bookings

- To understand and measure the impact of introducing charging the Sports and Health team have undertaken monthly court booking data analysis across all 12 venues.
- The table below shows that since the scheme re-launched on the 1st April 2021, the courts have seen an increase in court bookings when comparing to 2017, 2018 & 2019. This is a positive trend and indicates that the Parks Tennis scheme is well understood and is attracting a membership of active tennis players.
- The usage data from May 2020 to December 2020 is much higher due to tennis being one of the first sports to return after each lockdown. As the tennis membership was free of charge at this time, there was a dramatic increase in free members and free bookings as indicated in the table.
- However, during that period we also had a record number of bookings, where the hirer failed to attend (no shows) which ranged between 49% - 57% of all bookings each month. Officers received consistent complaints of people being unable to book when no-one was using the courts. Since the re-launch and the introduction of a paid membership scheme we have received no complaints of people not turning up for their booking.

Table 1: Total Court Hours Booked per Month:

	2017 Paid	2018 Paid	2019 Free	2020 Free	2021 Free - Paid*	2022 Paid
January		484.5	577.5	837	450	1157
February		626.5	708	789	Covid	1034
March		549	962.5	1399	670.5	1457
April		1044.5	1559	Covid	4593*	
May		1570	1977.5	6732	3818	
June	777	1708	2043	11867	3589.5	
July	2219	1835	3409	11691	3656	
August	1462.5	2006.5	2768	8329	3257	
September	999	1368.5	2030.5	5652	2997.5	
October	814	965	1331.5	3623	2082	
November	885	563	833.5	345	1297	
December	902	468	676	2322	901.5	
Year End Totals	8,058.5	13,188.5	18,876	53,586	27,312	3,648

Coaching & General Hire

12. With the re-launch of the Parks Tennis scheme a review was carried out of the coaching providers and third-party access (Netball, PlayBall, filming, etc) to the courts for private coaching or other use. This led to the development and launch of the Coaching Packages and General Hire Passes with a more robust agreement in place and set affordable business rental fees for local qualified and LTA accredited coaches.
13. Currently there are 3 tennis coaching providers operating community programmes across 7 of the Park Tennis sites with an 8th site due to start from June 2022. As part of these agreements, the providers have a set number of court hours per week and they provide a free weekly community session during term time at their sites.
 - Surrey Tennis Coaching venues: Churchfields, Cobham, *Civic Centre, Cricket Way and Oatlands
 - Take Tennis Lessons venues: Elmgrove and Coronation
 - Set Point Tennis Academy: Long Ditton
14. PlayBall Esher have been issued a general hire pass in the summer months at Oatlands and Coronation Recreation Grounds. Claygate Netball Club have been issued a general hire pass at the Esher Civic Centre; this is currently on hold due to the resurfacing works that are currently underway.
15. The coaching packages and general hire pass allow the Council to maintain safeguarding standards in the parks and allow business to operate while ensuring public access is protected.

Court improvements

16. The Council has a 3-year rolling programme of court improvements, which started in 2021 with the repainting of Cobham and Molesey Hurst and the resurfacing of Giggs Hill. (See photos below)

Giggs Hill - Resurface and Repaint



Molesey Repaint



17. The resurfacing works at Giggs Hill has reduced the puddling problem that is experienced during heavy or prolonged rain. With the drainage having been improved we have seen an increase in bookings.
18. This year refurbishment programme started in late May with the court resurfacing and new fencing at the Esher Civic Centre. Long Ditton is scheduled to be resurfaced in June/July when the ground is more conducive in allowing vehicles on and off the recreation ground site. Finally, Oatlands will be resurfaced and re-fenced in early autumn. A communication plan is in place to ensure both local councillors and residents are aware when the works will be taking place and when the courts will not be available.
19. Looking ahead to 2023, four venues are scheduled to be resurfaced: Grovelands, Coronation, Churchfields and Cricket Way, which will also include new fencing.

Next Steps

20. As well as building on the success of the Parks Tennis programme a key priority is to increase usage on the courts from less active residents. To achieve this the Tennis Development Officer will continue to support Shout & PA Housing events with free tennis during the events where possible and the promotion of the free Play Tennis Pass. This will include looking at how we can provide equipment to encourage more people to play tennis and then sign up to the free Play Tennis Pass as well as work closely with local schools.
21. Future improvements to the Park Tennis courts will include investigations into the possibility of floodlighting sites to increase the opportunities to play year-round.

Summary

22. The introduction of the tennis development programme has been hugely successful during 21/22. The introduction in charging has not

adversely impacted on the court usage with over 3,000 members using the court facilities as well generating income for the council to reinvest in local sports provision. The coaching programme has grown across the borough which provides high quality and affordable opportunities for children and adults to improve their tennis skills. The tennis courts refurbishment programme is also progressing well with most court sites being improved over the next 3 years.

Financial implications:

As contained within the report

Environmental/Sustainability Implications:

None

Legal implications:

None

Equality Implications:

Free tennis passes are promoted to those on low income to ensure access to the courts can be provided.

Risk Implications:

None

Community Safety Implications:

None

Principal Consultees:

Group Services accountant
Strategic Director Services

Background papers:

None

Enclosures/Appendices:

None

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