

Committee Report Checklist

Please submit the completed checklists with your report. If final draft report does not include all the information/sign offs required, your item will be delayed until the next meeting cycle.

Stage 1

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Yes / No	Date
Councillor engagement / input from Chair prior to briefing	Yes	14/8/2025
Commissioner engagement (if report focused on issues of concern to Commissioners such as Finance, Assets etc)	No	
Relevant Group Head review	Yes	14/8/2025
MAT+ review (to have been circulated at least 5 working days before Stage 2)	Yes	15/8/2025
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee	Yes	14/8/2025
	Reviewed by	
Risk comments		
Legal comments	J Clare	28/8/2025
HR comments (if applicable)	N/A	

For reports with material financial or legal implications the author should engage with the respective teams at the outset and receive input to their reports prior to asking for MO or s151 comments.

Do not forward to stage 2 unless all the above have been completed.

Stage 2

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Completed by	Date
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	L.Heron	28/08/25
S151 Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	T.Collier	27/8/25
Confirm final report cleared by MAT		

Community Wellbeing & Housing Committee

30 September 2025

Title	Group Training Licences in Parks
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Mary Holdaway, Leisure Development Manager
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	Community Resilience Environment Services
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: Approve the continuation of the Group Training Licences in Parks Policy and review the fees and charges annually in line with all Council fees and charges.
Reason for Recommendation	The Council needs to ensure that there is a robust procedure in place to support the use of parks for outdoor recreation, ensuring suitable checks are in place, as well as offering the use at an affordable price. By encouraging applications and issuing licences, the risk to the Council is reduced and safeguards residents.

1. Executive summary of the report *(expand detail in Key Issues section below)*

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none">A policy for outdoor fitness training in parks was adopted last autumn and is subject to an annual review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To ensure that fitness trainers seek official permission to use our parks to safeguard both the Council and residents.
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">To continue using the same policy and pricing structure, subject to an annual review of prices in line with all Council fees and charges. Review the wider policy and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to promote the opportunity and invite applications from fitness instructors.

process once the new unitary authorities are in place.	
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2. Key issues

- 2.1 Fitness instructors are requested to seek permission from the Council to use parks and open spaces. Historically, many instructors have commented that our fees were too high. During the Covid pandemic, a decision was made to allow instructors to use our parks for free due to the ongoing displacement situation caused by Covid.
- 2.2 In 2024, the Committee considered a report to address fitness instructors using the Borough's parks and open spaces. At the time, the Committee agreed to introduce a new policy whereby applications are made to the Council. The Committee expressed concerns about introducing a fee, not wanting to discourage people to be active or risk that the residents would need to pay a higher participant fee. We settled on an approach whereby an application process was introduced, and a nominal fee was charged for using the Borough's assets. The set fees are driven by amount of activity and number of users. This approach safeguards both the Council and residents, ensuring insurance and qualification checks take place. The process is also flexible, allowing applications to be submitted at any point in the year
- 2.3 Currently, Impact Athletics Club have an annual licence to operate in Cedars Recreation Ground until mid-October 2025 and Train Fresh to operate in Laleham Park until the end of the financial year.
- 2.4 A handful of other enquiries have been received and instructors have been signposted to our application process, however, no further applications have been received.
- 2.5 The law enforcement team support the implementation of licences and are not aware of any additional instructors currently operating in our parks.
- 2.6 With local government reorganisation on the horizon and as all local authorities have their own policy, officers recommend continuing with the status quo and deferring a review of the policy and procedures until the new unitary authority is in place to ensure a standardized approach. Elmbridge Borough Council have a policy for annual licences for fitness training. Runnymede Borough Council have an application process for events in parks.
- 2.7 Furthermore, in the interim, it is recommended that the annual prices to be reviewed as part of the annual review of all Council fees and charges. Retain the option to offer 'price on application' to retain the discretion to consider unique cases.

3. Options appraisal and proposal

- 3.1 Option 1 (preferred option): continue with policy and associated fees
Advantages:
 - Robust and fair procedure in place to assess applications;

- Reduces the risk to the Council and safeguards residents by ensuring instructors have qualifications, insurance and other relevant documentation
- The Council can retain control over activities in its parks
- Reasonable fees that providers can afford including a tiered system depending on the group size of participants;
- Short term licence option for new groups interested in starting out;
- Encourages increased use of parks and boosts physical activity, improving health and wellbeing in line with both our Health & Wellbeing Strategy and Leisure & Cultural Strategy;
- Follows similar process in place for Community Lettings;
- Applications can be made throughout the year;
- No fee for one-to-one tuition

Disadvantages:

- Time required to assess applications and create licences for instructors
- Fee may be a deterrent

3.2 Option 2: Encourage applications but apply no fee

Advantages:

- Continues the process which reduces the risk to the Council and safeguards residents by ensuring instructors have qualifications, insurance and other relevant documentation
- The Council can retain control over activities in its parks
- No financial burden for instructors or residents
- Encourages increased use of parks and boosts physical activity, improving health and wellbeing in line with both our Health & Wellbeing Strategy and Leisure & Cultural Strategy;

Disadvantages:

- Time required to assess applications;
- The Council would miss out on immediate income;
- Inconsistent approach that park bookings are required for some events but not others

3.3 Option 3: Do not allow fitness training in parks

Advantages:

- Saves time as no need to produce licences

Disadvantages:

- The Council would miss out on immediate income;
- Fitness trainers may be operating without seeking permission and without a licence;

- It is difficult for the Council to control the activity within its parks;
- There is a risk that fitness trainers may be operating without relevant qualifications & insurance and are failing to comply with the Council's Health and Safety requirements, increasing the risk to the Council and residents.
- Is not in line with both Spelthorne Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Leisure & Cultural Strategy

3.4 Option 4: continue with policy and increase fees

Advantages:

- Robust and fair procedure in place to assess applications;
- Reduces the risk to the Council and safeguards residents by ensuring instructors have qualifications, insurance and other relevant documentation
- The Council can retain control over activities in its parks
- Reasonable fees that providers can afford including a tiered system depending on the group size of participants;
- Short term licence option for new groups interested in starting out;
- Encourages increased use of parks and boosts physical activity, improving health and wellbeing in line with both our Health & Wellbeing Strategy and Leisure & Cultural Strategy;
- Follows similar process in place for Community Lettings;
- Applications can be made throughout the year;
- No fee for one-to-one tuition

Disadvantages:

- Time required to assess applications and create licences for instructors
- Increased fees may be a deterrent

3.5 Option 1: to continue with the policy and associated fees, is the preferred option as it ensures a continuation of service. It safeguards the Council and residents by ensuring instructors seek official permission to use our parks. By continuing the implementation of the policy whereby licences are issued, it also demonstrates the local demand for any future unitary authority.

4. Risk implications

- 4.1 There is a risk that instructors will use the parks without asking for official permission. This means that instructors may not have relevant insurance and qualifications in place. The process is advertised internally and externally so any enquiries received are signposted towards the application process.
- 4.2 If it is foreseen certain areas of parks may sustain heavy use, the inspection regime for these parks or areas will need to be more frequent.

- 4.3 Increasing fees could put instructors off applying, either meaning that instructors may consider operating without requesting permission or reduce the activity in parks.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 The fees charged are a nominal fee so a small amount of income is received. The two licences issued have generated an income of £900. If the decision is made to cease charging, the Council will miss out on potential income.

- 5.2 The proposed charges for 2026-27 are set out below:

Frequency	Number of people per session	Annual Charge	6 Monthly Charge	3 Monthly Charge
1-7 times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
8-14 times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
15-21 times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
21+ times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
Once a week	Up to 15	£180	£108	£60
2-4 times a week	Up to 15	£360	£216	£120
5-7 times a week	Up to 15	£540	£324	£180
Once a week	16-35	£300		
2-4 times a week	16-35	£600		
5-7 times a week	16-35	£900		

- 5.3 The table below shows fees subject to 5% and 10% increase

Frequency	Number of people per session	Annual Charge	6 Monthly Charge	3 Monthly Charge
1-7 times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
8-14 times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
15-21 times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
21+ times a week	1-2-1 tuition	n/a		
Once a week	Up to 15	£189 / £198	£114 / £119	£63 / £66
2-4 times a week	Up to 15	£378 / £396	£227 / £238	£126 / £132
5-7 times a week	Up to 15	£567 / £594	£340 / £356	£189 / £198
Once a week	16-35	£315 / £330		
2-4 times a week	16-35	£630 / £660		
5-7 times a week	16-35	£945 / £900		

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Approved fitness instructors will be obliged to enter into a licence agreement with the Council. The terms of any licence will require fitness instructors to provide evidence of public liability insurance and third-party liability insurance

in the sum of £5 million. Fitness instructors will also need to provide satisfactory Health and Safety risk assessments.

- 6.2 The Council has a duty of care under the Occupiers Liability Acts 1957 and 1984 to take reasonable steps to ensure that visitors to its public open spaces are reasonably safe. To comply with its statutory obligation the Council carries out regular park and open space inspections and ensures any remedial work is undertaken.

Corporate implications

7. S151 Officer comments

The Section 151 Officer is supportive of the recommended option, it is important that the Council continues to explore ways to make contributions, even if very small, towards the cost of discretionary services. It is sensible to anticipate align our approach with the other councils forming the successor unitary. The Council retains control over activities in its parks and the approach encourages increased use of parks and boosts physical activity, improving health and wellbeing

8. Monitoring Officer comments

- 8.1 The Monitoring Officer confirms that the relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

9. Procurement comments

There are no procurement implications in this report.

10. Equality and Diversity

Applications will request a detailed explanation of the service delivery as well as cost of sessions and whether discounts are offered to less advantaged residents.

11. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 11.1 Encouraging use of outdoor areas for fitness supports sustainability as the energy costs required to deliver outdoors are lower than delivering at indoor venues.

12. Other considerations

- 12.1 None.

13. Timetable for implementation

- 13.1 If approved, the process will continue immediately. The application process is available online and licences will be issued on receipt of applications.

14. Contact

14.1 Mary Holdaway – m.holdaway@spelthorne.gov.uk

14.2 Leisure – leisure@spelthorne.gov.uk

***Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer
Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.***

Background papers: There are none.

**Appendices:
There are none.**