

TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY

DATE	18/11/2021
REPORT OF	Helen Isaacs, Assistant Chief Executive
SUBJECT	Policy for the Use of Council Owned Land and Open Spaces
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIM

The policy aimed to standardise the Council approach to allowing events and activities to take place on Council land. This supports the Council's aims by ensuring the safe use of Council land, encourages people to make better use of the land to support health and wellbeing and encourages greater community involvement in local events supporting sustainable communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides an update of the implementation of the land use policy and associated fees.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

The Policy was designed to give clarity to event organisers around what Council owned land was available to hold events. It introduced a new fee structure for the use of the land depending on the scale and nature of the event. Community and local charity events would not be charged whilst commercial events would be charged a fee. The policy also introduced a reinstatement bond for events that could potentially cause damage to the land or resulted in costs to the council for removal of advertising material across the borough.

The policy was approved by Cabinet shortly before the Covid Pandemic and implementation and lessons learnt have therefore been hindered in that the Council was not in a position to agree to the use of its land for events. Over the last few months events have started to pick up again and we have been able to put the principles of the policy in to practice, whilst balancing the expectation to support the local economy and community to get back to 'normal'.

The majority of events are small community or charity events such as the Sparkle Walk and as such are not charged. The recent commercial and large events have mainly been held at the Meridian Showground which has its own booking and charging arrangements. There have been some fun fairs that have used council land and these have been charged in line with the new policy.

There has been some feedback that the increase in fees has been a challenge to event organisers but to date no organiser has withdrawn the request for the event as a result of the fee. This will be monitored as more and more events are

reintroduced following the relaxation of the rules around Covid.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The risk highlighted in the Cabinet report was that event organiser would use the land without informing the Council. There is also a risk that event organisers will no longer hold events in NEL due to the introduction of fees and charges but again this is not the experience so far, although again a true picture of the potential impact has not been possible due to Covid.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The policy is aimed at enabling the running of safe and successful events which should show the Council as an enabling and facilitating organisation. The fees have been increased slightly for the use of land which could cause some reputational issues but they are in line with the those charged by other Authorities and are used to cover the costs the Council incurs.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The policy will result in a small income stream for the Council.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The larger commercial events and some Civic and community events do have food and drink outlets that use single plastics for food and beverages. Consideration of more environmentally friendly materials as part of the conditions to use Council Land may need to be considered.

6. FINANCIAL/ LEGAL/ PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer or Strategic Workforce Lead.

7. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The policy affects all wards

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Report 2nd October 2019

Link to the Land Use Policy (from page 13):

<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2021/02/Use-of-council-land-and-open-spaces-policy-A11y-May20.pdf>

9. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Helen Isaacs, Assistant Chief Executive