

## Tennis in Parks – Options Appraisal

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### 1. Overview

This document outlines an appraisal undertaken in relation to the management of tennis across Barnet's parks and open spaces and future opportunities to deliver a sustainable programme of investment based on the recommendations provided in this report.

The appraisal has included a review and development of the following:

- Existing Management (and booking system)
- Supply and demand analysis (including penetration data supplied by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA))
- A review of tennis court condition and the estimated investment required to improve quality.
- A review of maintenance undertaken and prior investment in tennis courts across Barnet.
- An assessment of existing management models in place for tennis.
- Delivery of a pilot (two alternative management models)
- Funding opportunities
- Implementation of a gate-locking system
- Consultation and engagement

The recommendations within this report have been influenced by the needs and requirements of all residents to inform a sustainable operating model that enables access, supports demand, and encourages participation in the Borough.

### 2. Strategic Context

In recent years, the service has developed a series of key strategic documents designed to shape the delivery of sport and physical activity and facilities in parks and open spaces across the Borough. These include a Playing Pitch Strategy (2017), the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2016-2026) and the Fit and Active Barnet Framework (2021- 2026).

Our Greenspaces have the potential to support a wide range of cross-cutting strategic priorities, including public health and well-being, the environment, biodiversity, education, employment, community safety, regeneration, and community engagement. And the Council has an aspiration to re-think the role that parks and open spaces play within the borough.

Similarly, Barnet's Fit & Active Framework (2022-26) aims to work collaboratively with partners to improve Barnet's sporting facilities and provide opportunities to increase participation, especially amongst under-represented groups.

Demand for public parks massively increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and has refocused attention on the role they play in society to support both our mental health and physical wellbeing. During this period and beyond tennis usage has increased significantly, with visitors enjoying the wide range of outdoor activities on offer.

Whilst the service responded to challenges arising from the pandemic, it also presented an opportunity to trial new approaches with regard to sports bookings, community activities, agile working and operational resilience. Ensuring the Boroughs green spaces are managed and maintained cost effectively and using sustainable practices, is also vital.

## Insight and Demand

Sport England currently facilitate two National Surveys: Active Lives Adult, which is published twice a year and replaced our Active People Survey, and the Active Lives Children and Young People, which is published annually. Both give a unique and comprehensive view of how people are getting active.

Prior to 2016/17 the 'Active People Survey' (APS) was the National measure for activity levels in England. Data could be aggregated under various categories, which included sporting activity. The final results (APS 10) undertaken by Sport England in December 2016 produced the following local results for Barnet based on tennis demand;

- 7,184 residents currently play tennis
- 7,521 residents would like to play more tennis
- 57,145 residents would like to play more outdoor sport

The highest demand for tennis around existing courts is within the catchments of Victoria Park, Princes Park, Hendon Park, Childs Hill Park and Basing Hill Park.

In terms of existing demand levels and data available the current Active Lives Survey which replaced APS in 2017 does not currently provide the ability to aggregate and breakdown participation and demand by sports type.

The figures therefore included within the above are to be treated with caution. However, based on population size of the Borough, casual use and the total number of tennis clubs within Barnet it is reasonable to expect that there is an existing and future demand to play tennis.

### *National Research*

According to a National Survey ('The Location of Play'), the importance of parks courts is emphasised by the following data on where people play tennis.

Parks are the highest where people play 32%. Hence the need to protect Barnet's Park facilities and enhance them.

### **National Survey – Location of Play**

Location	% Players
Parks	32%
Education sites	21%
Tennis clubs	14%

Leisure centres	10%
Gyms/health clubs	7%
Private courts	5%
Indoor tennis centres	5%
Elsewhere	5%

**Organised play:** Parks players are less reliant on organised tennis activity but heavily reliant on using parks for social tennis with friends and family:

#### National survey Organised Play

Type of Tennis	% Parks Players	% Club Players
Social tennis with friends/family	90%	74%
Informal tennis	15%	18%
Individual tennis competition	2%	17%
Group coaching/lessons	2%	15%
Team tennis competition	1%	13%
Private lessons	1%	11%
Cardio tennis	3%	8%

**Satisfaction levels with courts:** The % of players of each type who are 'very satisfied' are as follows:

#### National Survey – Satisfaction Levels with Courts

Aspects of courts	% Parks players	% Club players
Safety of courts	28%	49%
Proximity to home	31%	45%
Condition of courts	13%	39%
Ease of booking	16%	35%
Cost of courts	36%	31%
Availability of courts	19%	30%
Number of courts	13%	30%
Customer service	10%	27%
Ancillary facilities	5%	26%

**Awareness of local tennis courts:** The importance of publicising court availability is emphasised by the following findings.

#### National Survey – Awareness of Local Tennis Courts

Type of court	% People aware
Parks courts	31%

Tennis club courts	28%
Leisure centres	27%
Education courts	15%
Indoor tennis centres	10%
Gyms/health clubs	12%
Other courts	9%
No facilities nearby	11%
No known facilities nearby	25%

### 3. Management and Operation

Barnet has 58 public tennis courts over 22 parks locations, excluding the tennis courts at Victoria Recreation Ground which are managed as part of the Councils Leisure Management Contract with GLL.

A general overview includes:

- Operation managed in house by the Greenspaces Team
- Publicly accessible tennis courts are either free to access or pay and play (site dependant)
- No online booking system in place (prior to April 2021)
- Minimal coaching provision in parks
- No community floodlit courts
- Indoor provision provided via private clubs
- Limited usage data
- Reactive maintenance undertaken
- Fees and Charges are submitted annually as part of the Councils Business Planning Process.

Each location is varied in quality and condition, further detailed analysis for each site can be found within the Councils Playing Pitch Strategy.

Prior to April 2021 there was no online booking system in place, previous historical arrangements included operation via service level agreements with the café on site at Hendon Park (bookings were managed in exchange for half of the income generated).

Bookings are charged at an hourly rate (£7) and agreed within the Council's fees and charges policy adopted each year. The current courts which adopt a pay and play model are Victoria Park (Finchley) and Hendon Park (Hendon), all remaining courts are largely free-to-play and distributed on a first-come-first-served basis. Prior to the implementation of the Councils Tennis Pilot (2020/21) the Greenspaces and Leisure Service generated between £2.5k - £4k per annum from tennis court hire.

Any individual or block bookings were previously taken over the phone by the Greenspaces Team. This resulted in an inconsistent and less efficient operation, which presented a range of issues to the service and residents. These identified challenges included:

### Limited Data

The majority of playing time on the Borough's courts had been distributed on a first-come-first-served basis, which resulted in waiting times and difficulty in securing a court on which to play.

Without a formal process in place for securing court time, conflicts present themselves in relation to players remaining on court for too long, especially during peak times. With no guarantee that a court will be available, players will not travel to sites to play.

Thus, impacting the ability and potential to drive interest and participation for tennis in the borough. There was no system in place for measuring the number of players and trends across the various sites. This makes it difficult to capture and then address any lack of take-up and improve the health and wellbeing of Barnet's residents.

### Managing court bookings

For the sites where a booking system was in place, the approach presented challenges on ensuring accurate information had been recorded and monies collated.

Meanwhile, there were a number of court bookings arranged for groups and coaching sessions through a manual process administered by Council officers. This was a time-intensive process and one that is difficult to enforce; groups with bookings have found themselves having to ask for other users to clear the courts they have paid to use.

### Vandalism and court misuse

Tennis facilities in parks are, on occasion, subject to damage to fencing, nets, or the courts themselves. This may be due to targeted vandalism by criminals that have gained access to the facility, or it may be due to misuse of the courts. For example, using the courts for football or 'foot tennis' can damage nets, posts and fences. This increases repairs costs to the Council significantly and raises health and safety issues, and can be addressed through a more secure booking approach.

### Court maintenance and investment

Court improvements have been delivered where funding has been secured; this is a less targeted approach which can allow courts to fall into a state of disrepair.

Responsive repairs are generally more costly to the Council than a programmed, regular maintenance programme. Furthermore, regular maintenance greatly reduces the risk of health and safety issues at the Council's courts.

### Funding the service

The Greenspaces and Leisure service faces a challenge in ensuring its tennis provision is high quality and accessible whilst maintaining its financial viability.

## **4. Investment and Funding**

The Council has invested in parks and open spaces in a range of capital projects over the last six years. These include simple refurbishments of play areas, improving access, and transforming spaces. However the current level of capital investment in parks is relatively modest in relation to the size of Barnet's parks portfolio, and the service has explored the potential to secure additional investment from regeneration, CIL and external funds.

Since the adoption of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy approximately £180,000 has been spent on maintaining and refurbishing Barnet's tennis courts. With a total of £175,000 secured through Section 106 monies and external funding.

In 2020/21 the greenspaces and leisure service were successful in securing strategic CIL monies (£3.75m) to support a wide range of improvements across parks and open spaces. Approximately £0.750m of this funding has been ringfenced to deliver a Borough wide programme of refurbishment across all tennis courts in Barnet.

The Council has also been engaged with the LTA to progress a funding application under the 'Parks Investment Programme Fund' to secure grant monies (circa £400,000) which would act as a contribution towards the full refurbishment programme currently estimated to at £800,000.

The application is currently at Stage 1 with a final response and outcome expected by early 2023. Should the Council be successful in obtaining an award, a range of conditions, including establishment of a 'sinking fund' would need to be created.

The LTA are currently in the process of procuring a framework of construction partners. Once completed (anticipated January 2023) the Councils application will progress to a Stage 2 review in which the current estimates will be compared to actual current market rates.

Should the Council secure LTA funding this will augment the strategic CIL monies which have been ringfenced to deliver a Borough wide investment programme. This will be a programme of improvement led by the Council and is likely to be delivered in phases, ensuring that access is available within each Constituency at any given time.

## **5. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)**

The Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) vision for tennis which has recently been introduced following a major consultative process. The vision is 'Tennis Opened Up' and the mission is to grow tennis by making it more relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable. Strategic initiatives at county and national level aim to support this.

In 2019/20 the Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) participation team advised of a grant available for the installation of electronic gates for tennis courts within parks and open spaces. This type of grant enables local authorities to manage the usage of courts and to potentially unlock a revenue stream to support the maintenance of the facilities and other park management services.

### Gate Installation and 'ClubSpark' Overview

Installation of the electronic gates work in tandem with an app which is free for a customer to download to their smart phones. A unique PIN is generated which allows access to a particular court for a specific time period. The usage of the app is free to the customer, with a small transactional fee being paid to the developer as part of each booking.

The high-level benefits of this platform are:

- Increased security for courts – introducing locks will help prevent court misuse and vandalism, increasing the longevity of a court's condition
- Efficient booking system for users – enables players to book a court for a specific time, reducing waits and conflicts presented by a first-come-first-served system
- Improved court condition and maintenance – revenue generated by bookings will fund the maintenance of the court and investment in facilities elsewhere

As part of the gate locking system review with the LTA, each site was assessed for its suitability to introduce charges and a supporting electronic gate-locking system to allow for bookings and takings. The assessment included the following elements:

- Court condition – including fencing
- Existing arrangements – including whether charging is already in place, or has been recently
- Local demand and penetration – measures devised by the LTA to assess the number of potential casual tennis players in close proximity to each court
- Number of courts and gates required

The LTA study found that Barnet had 18 courts that have the local potential for significant usage. A subsequent review undertaken by the Greenspaces and Leisure service subsequently concluded that there are an initial 10 sites which are in good condition and/or have significant potential for a return on investment using mains-powered gates funded by the LTA.

The locks require infrastructure to be put in place at the cost of the Council, which involves containment and electrical spurs being installed at each gate. The Council are then responsible for maintenance and power.

Other locking solutions are available and provided by other companies and tennis operators, including battery-powered options, which has recently been introduced by the LTA.

The site priority sites identified by the service are outlined below:

- Edwarebury Park (3 courts, 2 gates)
- Friary Park (2 courts, 1 gate)
- Hendon Park (6 courts, 3 gates)
- Mill Hill Park (3 courts, 3 gates)
- Montrose Playing Fields (2 courts, 1 gate)
- Sunnyhill Park (2 courts, 1 gate)
- Victoria Park (5 courts, 3 gates)
- Lyttelton Playing Fields (3 courts, 2 gates)
- Northway Gardens (2 courts, 2 gates)
- Old Courthouse Recreation Ground (4 courts, 2 gates)

The quality of the above courts and those not included varies significantly. When considered in conjunction with their size, popularity and potential for income.

### Booking System

Prior to April 2021, Barnet was one of only nine London Boroughs which did not employ some form booking platform for its parks tennis courts. Those that do so operate a range of management models, for example:

- London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames: manage the pay-and-play element of their offer themselves, whilst outsourcing coaching to a local sports trust. The coaching generates an annual fee of to the Council, as part of a total income.
- London Borough of Wandsworth works in partnership with tennis operator All Star, who operate 28 courts across six sites, with an offer that includes an annual membership, pay-and-play and coaching. The total income generates a profit shared between the Borough and the operator. Another operator is responsible for two further sites within the Borough, generating further income.
- London Borough of Newham work with LTA to operate four sites with 15 courts.

During 2020/21 the Council secured £16,700 through the gate access system grant. The funding supported the implementation of three gates at Victoria Park (Finchley). This location was selected based on previous management arrangements, usage (pay and play/ block bookings) and recent investment. Specific conditions of the grant included;

- Gates had to be provided and installed by the LTA's gate provider.
- The gate access system has to be installed and utilised for a minimum of five years.
- The ClubSpark booking platform will be used to manage the site for a minimum of five years from the installation date.
- No one shall be denied the right to access/use the site on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, occupation, political persuasion, or having or not having dependants.

This opportunity enabled the Greenspaces and Leisure Service to further assess operational arrangements and establish the most appropriate model for future delivery.

## **6. Management Models**

Broadly, there are three operational models available to local authorities:

1. In-house management – involves the local authority taking all income from bookings but also being responsible for the continued maintenance of courts in the form of a sinking fund.
2. Outsourced to a leisure or tennis operator – either a leisure or specialist tennis operator takes on the responsibility for the courts under a lease, and an annual fee is agreed between the local authority and operator; the sinking fund might be the responsibility of either party.
3. Outsourced to a tennis club – similar to the above model, but with a significant focus on community use built into any use.



The table below summarises the key considerations in the management approaches;

	<b>In-house management</b>	<b>Outsourced to operator /Club</b>
<b>Court maintenance</b>	Facility refurbishment and redevelopment remains responsibility of local authority	Facility refurbishment and redevelopment remains responsibility of local authority
<b>Gate installation</b>	Co-ordinated by Council, with support of grant funding	Funded by Council, co-ordinated by operator
<b>Income</b>	Net income retained by Council	Net income split with operator, portion-share to be agreed
<b>Ongoing costs</b>	Gate maintenance, communications, customer service etc funded by Council	Gate maintenance, communications, customer service etc funded by operator
<b>Customer service</b>	Led by G&L service with support of LTA app or other technology	Led by operator with own technology and staff
<b>Communications and participation</b>	Led by local authority, including signage and engagement with local coaches and community groups	Operator to run own public engagement strategy, including coaching schemes, community group bookings and signage/online communications

The coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have resulted in an increased usage and focus on Barnet’s parks and green spaces. However, there is little appetite for a local club to take on management of one or more court. Similarly, the number of leisure or tennis operators that would be interested in taking on a lease for one or more of the Council’s sites is presently limited owing to the existing economic climate.

## 7. Pilot scheme

To assess the most efficient operating model and one which aligns with the Councils priorities, a ‘Pilot Scheme’ was delivered between September 2020 – December 2021.

The Pilot tested two operating models for public tennis courts.

- An in-house model using a bookings system provided by The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA),
- outsourced model working with a third-party operator.

Both models provided a pay to play and a free to play offer as set out in Table 1 below. The pilot enabled a 1 hr session, with the booking covering the reservation of the court only, individual equipment was not provided.

The following systems were reviewed for implementation:

- No booking system, locks or charging – retaining courts that are free-to-play and playing time is distributed on a first-come-first-served basis
- Locks and booking system introduced, no charges – this would ensure fair use and security at the costs, with no immediate revenue for the Council

- Locks and booking system introduced, with fees & charges – this is the proposed option for sites with high state of readiness

Both the LTA and third-party operator were appointed through a Single Tender Action in line with Council’s Contract Procedure Rules, documented and approved through a Chief Officer Decision (COD) in July 2020. The COD also set out the details of the initial capital set up and ongoing revenue costs, a breakdown of these costs can be found below.

The charges applied to both Victoria Park and Hendon Park were below the existing approved Council Fees and Charges (2020/21) to encourage all ages and abilities and reviewed to align with benchmarked facilities. The pricing schedule also includes a concessionary rate for Over 60yrs and Under 16yrs.

Prior to the implementation of the two pilots the Greenspaces Team engaged with other boroughs to consider other management models. Most other boroughs either operated an in house or outsourced model. Some boroughs outsourced their operations to their leisure provider.

The following four sites were selected for the Pilot, due to their differing characteristics and potential to gather evidence on usage, court condition, demographic, investment, income potential:

**Table 1 – Tennis Pilot Sites**

	Victoria Park	Montrose Playing Fields	Hendon Park	Edgwarebury Park
<b>Ward</b>	West Finchley	Burnt Oak	West Hendon	Edgware
<b>Courts &amp; gates</b>	5 courts serviced by 3 gates	2 courts serviced by 1 gate	6 courts serviced by 3 gates	3 courts serviced by 2 gates
<b>Condition</b>	New courts and fencing	New courts and fencing	Reasonable condition	Good condition
<b>Booking &amp; charging history</b>	Charges used to apply but had been suspended in recent years	No fees charged in recent history	Fees & charges in place prior to the pilot	No fees charged in recent history
<b>To be operated by</b>	LBB supported by LTA’s Rally app	LBB supported by LTA’s Rally app	Premier Tennis third party operator	Premier Tennis third party operator
<b>Locks installed by</b>	LTA – LBB to arrange supporting infrastructure	No locks required	Operator, at cost to LBB	No locks required
<b>Fees &amp; charges</b>	£7 and £3.60 (concessionary)  per court per hour in line with approved Fees & Charges	Free to play	£7 and £3.70 (concessionary)  per court per hour in line with approved Fees & Charges	Free to play
<b>Income</b>	Net income	No income	Profit share with	No profit to share

arrangements retained by LBB the operator

Table 2 below sets out the performance of the two pilots from September 2020-September 2021 (recorded 12 months). A general summary overview highlighted;

- A total of 21,457 bookings were generated across all four sites.
- Victoria Park and Edgwarebury Park generated the most bookings.
- Montrose Playing Fields and Edgwarebury Park had the highest utilisation rates (both at 75%)
- Hendon Park had the lowest utilisation rate (at 25%).
- Both Victoria Park and Hendon Park exceeded the projected levels of income.
- Of the fee-paying sites, Victoria Park generated the highest net income (£35,211.20)
- Feedback received from groups in relation to the online booking system, specifically the ability to secure block bookings.

**Table 2 – Performance data September 2020-September 2021**

	Victoria Park 5 Courts	Montrose Playing Fields 2 Courts	Hendon Park 6 Courts	Edgwarebury Park 2 Courts
Total number of bookings	6,713	4,387	4,914	5,440
% Utilisation	43%	75%	25%	75%
Gross income	£35,211.20	N/A	Revenue costs generated by the third-party operator are commercially sensitive.	N/A
Net income	£32,691.47	N/A	£15,597.15	N/A
Projected Net income <sup>1</sup>	£13,129.88	N/A	£7,877.81 <sup>2</sup>	N/A
Difference	£19,561.60	N/A	£7,719.34	N/A

1 - Projections based on information supplied by LTA.

2 - Projections adjusted to mirror LBB's share of income.

The pilots launched after restrictions related to tennis were lifted from the first COVID Lockdown of 2020 however there were two further lockdowns during November 2020 and January 2021 which required the closure of the courts which affected approximately two months of play and bookings.

Tables 3.1 & 3.2 below sets out the capital and revenue costs associated with setting up and running the pilot

**Table 3.1 – Victoria Park Capital and Revenue Costs**

	LBB Capital	LBB Revenue	Externally funded
X3 Access gate	Nil	Nil	£16,700.00
Installation of Electricity supply	£3,295.00	Nil	Nil
Annual costs for gate operations	Nil	£1,033.40	Nil

**Table 3.2 – Hendon Park Capital and Revenue Costs**

	LBB Capital	LBB Revenue	Externally funded
X3 Access gate	Nil	£4,500 <sup>3</sup>	Nil
Installation of Electricity supply	Nil	Nil	Nil
Annual costs for gate operations	Nil	Nil	Nil

<sup>3</sup> - Costs offset by income received from operator

There were no capital or revenue costs associated with either Montrose Playing Fields or Edgwarebury Park.

During the pilot phase the Greenspaces Team explored moving the existing block bookings at Victoria Park to the online booking's portal allowing the groups to self-serve. However, concerns were raised by user groups in respect of this method and the Council continued to process block booking requests only.

Regardless of the implementation of any bookings, management or charging model the council is not proposing to change the existing block bookings system and all existing bookings will be protected under their current agreements.

## 8. Current Operating Model & Usage

Following the conclusion of the Tennis Pilot Scheme the following actions we taken

Hendon Park and Edgwarebury Park were transferred over from the third-party contractor to the in-house management system from April 2022

All the borough's parks tennis courts were added to the online booking system as free to play sites without access control gates from April 2021

An income target was added to the councils Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) specifically related to tennis courts in Barnet's parks and open spaces as set out below

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
£20,000	£38,000	£37,000	<b>£95,000</b>

The MTFS target for 2022/23 will be met from income generated through pay and play charges for Victoria and Hendon Parks.

Annual maintenance costs associated with the access control gates is presently managed within the Greenspaces revenue budgets.

There were no additional associated with the roll out of the bookings system across all sites as the system was only to be used for free to play bookings.

### Current Usage

Table 4 below shows the total number of bookings for all parks tennis courts for the period of 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022

**Table 4 – Tennis court usage for all parks tennis courts 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022**

Park	Number of bookings	Number of Courts	Bookings per Court
Bethune Recreation Ground	544	1	544
Bittacy Hill Park	768	2	384
Cherry Tree Wood	5,133	2	2,567
Childs Hill Park	1,466	2	733
Edgwarebury Park	3,087	2	1,544
Friary Park	1,273	2	637
Halliwick Recreation Ground	330	2	165
Hendon Park	3,265	6	544
Lyttleton Playing Fields	1,937	3	646
Mill Hill Park	2,639	3	880
Montrose Playing Fields	3,583	2	1,792
New Southgate Recreation Ground	110	2	55
Northway Gardens	208	5	42
Oak Hill Park	3,438	3	1,146
Old Courthouse Recreation Ground	1,146	6	191
Princes Park	488	2	244
Rushgrove Park	261	2	131
Stonegrove Park	890	1	890
Sunnyhill Park	1,512	3	504
Tudor Sports Ground	595	1	595
Victoria Park	5,173	5	1,035
West Hendon Playing Fields	54	1	54
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>37,900</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>15,319</b>

## 9. Future Operating Model

The below tables consider the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats associated with the two management models (tested as part of the Pilot) and a do-nothing option.

Management Model	Description	Score <sup>4</sup>
<b>Do Nothing</b>	Return to the previous system of free to play with no bookings system.	<b>-7</b>
<b>In house model</b>	Continue with the LTA bookings portal and seek to increase the number of paid for sites across the borough	8
<b>Third party operator model</b>	Procure a single operator to manage and operate all of the parks tennis courts	5

4 – The scoring methodology used for the options appraisals was developed by the Greenspaces and Leisure Team in order to quantify the positive (strengths & opportunities and negative impacts (weaknesses & threats) for each option.

**Table 5.1 – Management Model – Do Nothing**

	<b>Do Nothing Return to the previous system of free to play with no bookings system.</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	• This approach would remove any barriers to users being able to book	2

(+5)	online.	
<b>Weaknesses</b> (-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council would not be able to gather any usage data that could be used to apply for improvement grants.</li> <li>The council would not be able to gather any income that could be used to offset the cost of maintenance and future improvements.</li> <li>Users would not be able to book and safeguard their slot and may have to wait extended periods of time for a court to become available.</li> </ul>	-5
<b>Opportunities</b> (+5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	0
<b>Threats</b> (-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council would have to pay back the LTA gate grant associated with Victoria Park.</li> <li>There would be no system to manage and control unlicensed coaches from taking over court.</li> </ul>	-4
<b>Final Score</b>		<b>-7</b>

**Table 5.2 – Management Model – In House Model**

	<b>In house model</b> <b>Continue with the LTA bookings portal and seek to increase the number of paid for sites across the borough</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Strengths</b> (+5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would allow for continued gathering of usage data that could be used to evidence need when applying for external funding.</li> <li>The income generated would be used to offset the cost of the management and maintenance of the borough's parks and open spaces.</li> <li>The council would not have to repay the LTA gate grant associated with Victoria Park.</li> <li>A single management and bookings system across all sites would avoid any confusion to residents and users.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Weaknesses</b> (-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There would be an increased administration burden placed upon the Greenspaces Service to manage and maintain the bookings system and in dealing with issues or complaints.</li> <li>The council would need to invest its own capital monies in order to ensure courts are of a high quality.</li> </ul>	-1
<b>Opportunities</b> (+5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other boroughs marketed their courts to secure a single coach operator for each site location securing additional revenue and ensuring a quality of provision and programming.</li> <li>A proportion of the income could be placed into a reserve each year to create a ringfenced reserve that would be used to resurface courts as and when is required to maintain the quality of service and continued usage.</li> <li>The Greenspaces Team has a capital allocation within the capital programme that could fund any improvements required.</li> <li>The LTA has indicated that the council could apply to their access gate grant again for any other sites it wished to bring forward with access controls.</li> </ul>	4
<b>Threats</b> (-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	0
<b>Final Score</b>		<b>8</b>

**Table 5.3 – Management Model – Third Party Operator Model**

	<b>Third party operator model</b> <b>Procure a single operator to manage and operate all of the parks</b>	<b>Score</b>
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<b>tennis courts</b>		
<b>Strengths (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would allow for continued gathering of usage data.</li> <li>The income generated would be used to offset the cost of the management and maintenance of the borough's parks and open spaces.</li> <li>There would no increased administration burden as all enquiries would be managed by the operator.</li> <li>A single management and bookings system across all sites would avoid any confusion to residents and users.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Weaknesses (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council would receive a reduced level of income which would be affected by any capital investment the operator would need to include in the contract.</li> </ul>	-1
<b>Opportunities (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The operator could be commissioned to provide coaching and tennis courses to provide a quality tennis offer to residents and users.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Threats (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council would have to pay back the LTA gate grant associated with Victoria Park.</li> </ul>	-2
<b>Final Score</b>		<b>5</b>

In review the three options above the Greenspaces Team would recommend the In-House option utilising the LTA's booking system.

## 10. Types of Charging Models

As part of this appraisal the Council consulted with the LTA to understand how other Councils (including City of London and Royal Parks) in London managed their parks tennis courts. This is summarised by;

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Total number of Authorities</b>	34	Includes City of London and The Royal Parks
<b>Those with online booking</b>	26	
<b>Those with access control gates</b>	14	
<b>Those with Pay and Play Courts</b>	25	Court prices range from £3-£23 (Adults) Free-£9 (Concessionary)
<b>Those offering a season ticket</b>	6	Season Tickets range from £22-£55

The below tables consider the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats associated with the five charging models including a Free to Play option.

<b>Charging Model</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Score<sup>4</sup></b>
<b>Free to Play</b>	Make all courts free to play across all sites	-2
<b>Full Charging Model</b>	Introduce pay and play across all sites	1
<b>Mixed Charging Model</b>	A mixed economy of Free to Play other Pay and Play sites	3
<b>Peak/Off-Peak Charging Model</b>	A mixed pricing and free to play structure on all sites based on peak periods of usage.	3



<b>Annual Season Ticket –</b>	Nominal annual fee charged for two 1-hour tennis bookings per week available across all sites. Further courts would be at pay and play rates. Additionally, a provision of three hours per court per day of free to play for all sessions would be included.	6
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4 – The scoring methodology used for the options appraisals was developed by the Greenspaces and Leisure Team in order to quantify the positive (strengths & opportunities and negative impacts (weaknesses & threats) for each option.

**Table 6.1 – Charging Model – Free to Play**

	<b>Free to Play</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Strengths (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would remove any barriers associated with paying for court usage.</li> <li>This approach would align with views from users gathered through the consultation process.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Weaknesses (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council would not be able to gather any income that could be used to offset the cost of maintenance and future improvements.</li> <li>This would leave a budget pressure of £95,000 by 2024 as part of the MTFS savings plans as noted in section 2.1.3 of this document.</li> <li>No additional access control gates could be installed due to budget pressures for maintaining them.</li> </ul>	-3
<b>Opportunities (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council would be able to gather usage information from court bookings and track participation.</li> </ul>	1
<b>Threats (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would reduce the council’s ability to secure external investment from the LTA.</li> <li>The council would not be able to put money into a sinking fund to safeguard future court quality.</li> <li>Without access control gates the council cannot manage users booking and not turning up for courts (non-arrivers) thus taking away usable time slots.</li> </ul>	-3
<b>Final Score</b>		<b>-2</b>

**Table 6.2 – Charging Model – Full Charging Model**

	<b>Full Charging Model across all sites</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Strengths (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach puts the service in a strong position to meet the MTFS target.</li> <li>Access control gates could be installed across all sites thus managing non-arrivers</li> </ul>	2
<b>Weaknesses (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would not meet with the views on charging for courts expressed through the recent consultation.</li> </ul>	-1
<b>Opportunities (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External capital funding through the LTA would be available to the council to invest in courts.</li> <li>Revenue could be placed into a sinking fund to safeguard future court quality and condition.</li> <li>The council would be able to gather usage information from court bookings and track participation.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Threats (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would be a barrier to participation for some users due to affordability.</li> <li>Paying to play could drive down participation numbers.</li> <li>Risk of not generating enough income to cover management and sinking fund costs for the whole portfolio.</li> </ul>	-3



**Final Score 1**
**Table 6.3 – Charging Model – Mixed Charging Model**

	<b>Mixed Charging Model – some sites Free to Play other Pay and Play</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Strengths (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach puts the service in a strong position to meet the MTFS target.</li> <li>Access control gates could be installed across all sites thus managing non-arrivers</li> <li>Free sites go some way to mitigate consultation responses on court charging.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Weaknesses (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would not completely meet with the views on charging for courts expressed through the recent consultation.</li> <li>Potential for more pressure on free to play sites</li> </ul>	-2
<b>Opportunities (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External capital funding through the LTA would be available to the council to invest in courts.</li> <li>Revenue could be placed into a sinking fund to safeguard future court quality and condition.</li> <li>The council would be able to gather usage information from court bookings and track participation.</li> <li>Participants could select a free to play or pay and play site.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Threats (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would be a barrier to participation for some users due to affordability.</li> <li>Paying to play could drive down participation numbers.</li> <li>Risk of not generating enough income to cover management and sinking fund costs for the whole portfolio.</li> </ul>	-3
<b>Final Score</b>		<b>3</b>

**Table 6.4 – Charging Model – Peak/Off Peak Charging Model**

	<b>Peak/Off-Peak Charging Model – A mixed pricing and free to play structure on all sites based on peak periods of usage.</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Strengths (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach puts the service in a strong position to meet the MTFS target.</li> <li>Access control gates could be installed across all sites thus managing non-arrivers</li> <li>Free periods and off-peak rates go some way to mitigate consultation responses on court charging.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Weaknesses (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would not completely meet with the views on charging for courts expressed through the recent consultation.</li> <li>Model would increase back-office costs in administering the peak and off peak periods.</li> </ul>	-2
<b>Opportunities (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External capital funding through the LTA would be available to the council to invest in courts.</li> <li>Revenue could be placed into a sinking fund to safeguard future court quality and condition.</li> <li>The council would be able to gather usage information from court bookings and track participation.</li> <li>Peak and off-peak sessions could be flexed around school holidays.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Threats (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This approach would be a barrier to participation for some users due to affordability.</li> <li>Paying to play could drive down participation numbers.</li> </ul>	-3

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of not generating enough income to cover management and sinking fund costs for the whole portfolio.</li> </ul>	
<b>Final Score</b>		<b>3</b>

**Table 6.5 – Charging Model – Annual Season Ticket**

	<b>Annual Season Ticket – Nominal annual fee charged for two 1-hour tennis bookings per week available across all sites. Further courts would be at pay and play rates. Additionally, a provision of three hours per court per day of free to play for all sessions would be included.</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Strengths (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This approach puts the service in a strong position to meet the MTFS target.</li> <li>• Access control gates could be installed across all sites thus managing non-arrivers</li> <li>• Free hours will provide access for all and help to mitigate the introduction of a wider charging policy</li> </ul>	3
<b>Weaknesses (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This approach would not completely meet with the views on charging for courts expressed through the recent consultation.</li> </ul>	-1
<b>Opportunities (+5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External capital funding through the LTA would be available to the council to invest in courts.</li> <li>• Revenue could be placed into a sinking fund to safeguard future court quality and condition.</li> <li>• The council would be able to gather usage information from court bookings and track participation.</li> <li>• By keeping the season ticket at a nominal value tennis would remain affordable and accessible.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Threats (-5)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users may take out multiple season tickets to avoid pay and play rates</li> </ul>	-1
<b>Final Score</b>		<b>6</b>

Results from the consultation note that many users were opposed to a charging model being introduced across the portfolio however there is a revenue implication in relation to the management and maintenance of the courts and a cost associated with safeguarding future capital works to sustainably maintain the courts to high standard.

A season ticket model will provide an affordable option for residents to access tennis across the borough and will allow the council to safeguard future investment through the creation of a sinking fund for all sites and for each court.

### 11. Financial Modelling

A high-level business plan has been developed to providing the Council with an indication of the potential revenue position based on the following:

- Expansion of the existing and approved tennis court fees and charges to all tennis courts in parks
- Continuation of Block Bookings (protection of existing arrangements).
- The introduction of an Annual Season Membership

- Free to use access (provided during peak and off peak periods)

Annual Membership

The updated and proposed management model seeks to introduce a new ‘Annual Membership’ for Adults/ Concessions competitively priced at £35 per annum and £15 per annum respectively, providing access to two 1-hr slots per week. This point provides an affordable opportunity (which is equal to five pay and play bookings at the current rate) and responds directly to the consultation results which presented a strong desire for a ‘membership’ based offer.

Residents who purchased a ‘Membership’ would be permitted to book two 1-hour slots per week, 52 weeks of the year at any court across the borough, this would equate to £0.34p for adult season ticket holders and £0.14p for concessionary season ticket holders.

In comparison players playing two hours per week under the current pricing structure would equate to £728 per annum for adults and £384.80 per annum for concessionary players. This proposal is considerably lower and encourages participation across all user groups, ages and abilities.

Any additional court bookings beyond the two 1-hour slots per week would be paid for at the pay and play rate. In addition Membership holders would be permitted to access the ‘free to play’ slots across the Borough, however this would utilise one of their two 1-hr slots per week.

Assumed Modelling:

Table 7.1 – Season ticket prices

Type	Price	Notes
<b>Adult</b>	£35.00	Equal to five pay play bookings at the current rate
<b>Concessionary<sup>5</sup></b>	£15.00	Equal to four pay and play bookings at the current rate

5 – Under 16’s and Over 60’s

Table 7.2 – Estimated season ticket sales

Type	Price
<b>Total No bookings<sup>6</sup></b>	37,900
<b>Estimated season ticket sales</b>	9,000 <sup>7</sup>

6 – As shown in Table 4

7– Assumed ¼ of total bookings take up a season ticket, allows for users playing multiple times per week and non-take up of scheme

Table 7.3 – Projected income

Season Ticket Type	Estimated sales	Projected Income
<b>Adult</b>	4,500	£157,500
<b>Concessionary</b>	4,500	£67,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,000</b>	<b>£225,000</b>

The council has the opportunity to secure external funding through the LTA to invest in the Barnet's parks tennis courts across the whole borough. In order to secure the funding the council would need to agree to put £1,200 per court per year into a sinking fund.

The sinking fund will safeguard the tennis courts quality as a future funding pot for resurfacing and painting as and when required.

Additionally, the council can access further funding through the LTA to install access control gates on all parks sites. The gates will ensure that the courts are not being used for other purposes (dog walking, football etc) that cause damage to the courts and equipment as well allowing for reporting and tackling of non-arrivers (users who book courts and don't turn up and so take a facility away from other users).

Table 8 – Financial breakdown of income and costs

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>MTFS TOTAL Target</b>	£ 20,000.00	£ 58,000.00	£ 95,000.00
<b>Annual Sinking Fund</b>		£ 34,800.00	£ 69,600.00
<b>Annual gate costs</b>	£ 10,953.40	£ 10,953.40	£ 10,953.40
<b>TOTAL Target</b>	<b>£ 30,953.40</b>	<b>£ 103,753.40</b>	<b>£ 175,553.40</b>
<b>No Season Tickets to match target</b>		<b>4,150</b>	<b>7,000</b>

Table 8 shows that by 2024/25 only 7,000 season tickets would need to be sold to support delivery of the MTFS target, sinking fund and annual gate costs.

A conservative number of 9,000 season tickets has been projected based on the number of tennis bookings over the last year.

Any surplus income generated is assumed to be reinvested back into the management of the parks and open spaces.

## 12. Consultation

In considering the expansion of a pay and play model for tennis courts and to inform a recommended approach, between the 08 August and 19 September 2022 the council carried out public consultation via Engage Barnet in order to:

- Understand the local demand and interest in playing tennis
- Explore the options with the tennis community for parks tennis management that could apply based on ideas and good practice elsewhere
- explore the expansion of the fees and charges model applied for tennis court hire.
- explore the potential for the future operation and/or management of parks tennis.

The income generated from the pay and play charges will be used to contribute towards the upkeep and maintenance of the tennis courts and gates. This income will also help alleviate the budget gap as outlined in the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

In summary, the consultation was administered as follows:

- The Consultation was open for six weeks, from 08 August 2022 to the 19 September 2022 inclusive.
- The consultation was published on Engage Barnet <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk>.
- Respondent's views were gathered via an online survey. Paper copies of the questionnaire were also made available on request. A number of responses were also received via email.
- Relevant members of the Council were contacted and made aware of the consultation.
- The consultation was promoted via posters in and around the respective parks with outdoor tennis courts.

The questionnaire was developed to ascertain how the tennis courts are currently used and to gauge opinions on the proposed pay and play structure.

To enable further understanding and to permit residents the opportunity to express their views:

- An open-ended question, where respondents were invited to write any further comments on the proposals, well as more general comments was included;
- As were key demographic questions to help understand the views of different demographic groups.

A total of 486 responses were received, in addition to 3 responses via email. The key findings of the consultation are as follows;

- Key motivations (users and non-users) to play tennis related to suitable surface play, availability of courts and ability to book in advance.
- 315 respondents identified themselves as casual users, 66 block booking and 35 respondents identified as participating in coaching sessions.
- Most of the preferred court use was evenly split throughout the day with 33% preferring AM (07:00- 11:00) and 37% PM (17:00-20:00)
- Frequency of play appears consistent across all seasons, with Spring/Summer narrowly increasing on play time.
- 191 out of 217 respondents who provided an answer on the booking system strongly agreed/tended to agree it was clear and easy to find and access.
- 189/217 noted that it was easy to book a timeslot and only 10 respondents preferred historical arrangements (payment through café).
- 266 out of 389 respondents (68%) of respondents said they would like to see tennis coaching operated in parks via either a drop in/flexible coaching session or a licensed coach in a park.
- In respect of applying a future charging model; 235 out of 389 respondents answered 'no charge applied' with the remaining responses distributed across pricing as a flat rate, by day and time, by season, by user group and by user category.
- 289 out of 389 respondents also showed interest in both seasonal / annual memberships for individual and family (for both children and adults).

A full consultation report can be found in Appendix B- Tennis Consultation Report.

### 13. Promoting Tennis

There is huge potential for the Council to build on the existing relationship with the Fit and Active Barnet Partnership Board and the LTA to proactively build on what already exists to support and encourage people to play tennis.

A community development approach that focuses on research and mapping about the current context, building on what already exists using proactive outreach and ensuring the tennis community are involved in any promotional / campaign activities.

Through market research it has also become evident that Boroughs with well-established management models have a clear communication strategy in place. This specifically focuses on 'branding' tennis to support promotions and activities.

Examples of this include 'Tower Hamlets Tennis' and 'Play Tennis Waltham Forest' which both have dedicated websites relating to all information Tennis.

In delivering a programme of investment, it will be important for the Council to develop an identity for tennis in Barnet alongside the development and delivery of a communications plan. This plan will need to address as a minimum;

- Identity for Tennis in Barnet
- Booking procedure
- Programme (including promotional activities)
- Pricing Structure
- Court Improvement Programme
- FAQs
- Contact Information (including complaint procedure)

### 14. Summary and Conclusion

The analysis has covered both the financial and non-financial implications of different management vehicles and has covered a wide range of potential options, including:

- Continued in-house management;
- Outsourced management

Alongside assessing the different management options, the report has sought to review existing performance and identify areas of strength and weakness. This has then been used to inform the financial modelling of the options alongside the results of the public consultation, but provides useful information in its own right, in terms of potential short-term areas to focus on in ensuring high quality services / facilities.

The preferred management option identified is for the Council to retain the management and operation of the Boroughs tennis courts. This route currently provides the Council with the greatest potential to maximise participation whilst creating a sustainable business model.

Other key benefits include the ability to;

- Deliver improvements in Tennis which contribute to making Barnet's parks and green spaces 'among the best in London'
- Support the health and wellbeing of Barnet's residents through the provision and protection of fit-for-purpose sports facilities.
- Increase satisfaction across Parks and Open Spaces through a programme of targeted investment.
- Support the financial sustainability of the service through the expansion of a pricing structure, guided by the results of the public consultation.
- Protect community assets through the introduction of gated technology.
- Enable a more streamlined customer journey to access booking tennis courts in Barnet.

[..\2 - Options\200623 Tennis Modelling - LBB.xlsx](#)

