

West Berkshire Council
Equity Impact Assessment

Budget proposals 2026/27: Henwick Worthy Sports Ground

January 2026

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Environment Department – Countryside Team
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Budget proposals 2026/27: To extend and increase the peak-time hire charges for the artificial pitch at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	The Council consulted on increasing the peak-time hire charges for the artificial pitch at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground by 35% and secondly to reclassify Sundays as peak time. The consultation received strong opposition from stakeholders. For example, Newbury and Thatcham Hockey Club raised very strong opposition. They have stated that the proposed changes will increase their costs by around £20,000 next season, with nearly 40% of this due to Sundays being reclassified as peak charging days. The proposed fee increase may reduce accessibility due to affordability, particularly for children, juniors, and low-income families many of whom use the facility on Sundays. Sundays appear critical for youth hockey, and the changes could significantly affect participation. Financial pressure on clubs is another major concern, as higher membership fees may price out families and potentially lead to club and age group closures. Health and wellbeing could also suffer, as increased costs discourage participation, negatively impacting physical fitness and mental health. Community and social interaction, which clubs provide, may decline, threatening their sustainability. The proposal may undermine equality and inclusion, and could be seen to be at conflict with Sport England objectives and inclusive sport policies. Educational institutions i.e. local schools and colleges may reduce sports provision due to higher costs, and in the long term, reduced grassroots participation could harm talent development and damage the council's reputation.

Completed By	Kofi Adu-Gyamfi, Service Lead – Climate Change
Authorised By	Jon Winstanley, Service Director – Environment Department
Date of Assessment	22 January 2026

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.	Councils across the country continue to face unprecedented financial pressures, and West Berkshire Council (“the Council”) is no exception. The Council is responding to increasing demands in adults’ and children’s social care services supporting our most vulnerable residents, and in other areas such as homelessness and home to school transport. The increases in demand, combined with higher inflation and increasing costs, are financially impacting the Council and its suppliers. Henwick Worthy Sports Ground offers a wide range of outdoor sports facilities including a floodlit artificial pitch suitable for football and hockey. The pitch is available for hire every day from 10am to 10pm. Peak hours are defined as weekday evenings from 6pm to 10pm, and all day on Saturday. Bookings can be made for half or full pitch use. The site is owned and managed by West Berkshire Council, but is maintained by Krinkels UK Ltd, the Council’s grounds maintenance contractor. There is no formal volunteer programme associated with the pitch operations, although our regular community sports clubs often contribute to the sporting offer at the site through coaching and match-day support to help manage teams and supporters. From 1 October 2024 to date, the artificial pitch at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground has been booked 1,429 times, generating £86,663 in income. This reflects strong and consistent community demand, with usage spanning local football clubs, schools, and recreational groups. The facility plays a key role in supporting grassroots sport and active lifestyles across the district. In the 2024/25 financial year, our expenditure on this facility was £262,479, our total income was £176,886, made up from booking income, grants and contributions from Thatcham Town Council, and rental payments from local sports clubs. Our total net expenditure (the total spend minus any income) was £85,594.
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Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.	Proposal Details To increase the peak-time hire charges for the artificial pitch at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground by 35%: Artificial Full Pitch (11 a side) Peak-time Charges <table><tr><th>Period</th><th>Current cost</th><th>Proposed cost</th></tr><tr><td>30 mins</td><td>£46.00</td><td>£62.00</td></tr><tr><td>60 mins</td><td>£92.00</td><td>£124.00</td></tr><tr><td>90 mins</td><td>£140.00</td><td>£189.00</td></tr></table> Artificial Half Pitch (5 a side) Peak-time Charges <table><tr><th>Period</th><th>Current cost</th><th>Proposed cost</th></tr><tr><td>30 mins</td><td>£26.00</td><td>£35.00</td></tr><tr><td>60 mins</td><td>£51.00</td><td>£68.85</td></tr><tr><td>90 mins</td><td>£78.00</td><td>£105.30</td></tr></table> We also propose to extend the peak-time hire charges for the artificial pitch at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground to include all day Sunday. This was decided on as the best course of action because it can help the Council to meet the increasing operational and maintenance costs associated with this facility. The charges in recent years have not kept up with the significant investments that the Council has been making in the facility.	Period	Current cost	Proposed cost	30 mins	£46.00	£62.00	60 mins	£92.00	£124.00	90 mins	£140.00	£189.00	Period	Current cost	Proposed cost	30 mins	£26.00	£35.00	60 mins	£51.00	£68.85	90 mins	£78.00	£105.30
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Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you	Benchmarking of artificial pitch hire charges across a range of providers in the public, private, and charitable sectors, was carried out to inform our proposal. While charges vary significantly, the analysis indicates that: demand for artificial pitches remains high, particularly during weekday evenings (peak times) the competitive landscape and usage levels suggest there is scope to increase our hire fees above the rate of inflation without adversely affecting demand.																								

make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.	It is important to note that true comparisons are difficult due to: • variations in pricing structures, including pitch size (full, half, 5-a-side etc.), sport type, and booking duration • discounting and incentivisation schemes, such as community rates, block booking discounts, and school partnerships • seasonal pricing, with different rates applied in summer and winter months • Despite these differences, the benchmarking shows that full pitch peak-time hire charges (60 mins) range from £60 to £159 per hour, with most being between £105 and £125 per hour.
Alternatives considered / rejected Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.	Alternatives considered include: • Do nothing: this involves keeping the fees unchanged at 25/26 rates. This option was not deemed acceptable in the context of the rising operational costs and the Council's financial challenges. • Increase charges by inflation only: this option was not recommended because it will not help the Council to meet the operational costs and to continue investing in the facility for the safe enjoyment by customers. • Staggered increases to get to the charges consulted on over 3 years: this option is potentially deliverable, if decision makers give approval. It does not address the short-term funding gap. However, it provides a pathway to getting to a suitably funded facility in the medium term, whilst managing the concerns of site users about a sudden hike in fees.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	☐	☐	☒	The proposed fee increase may reduce accessibility due to affordability, particularly for children, juniors, and low-income families many of whom use the facility on Sundays. Sundays appear critical for youth hockey, and the changes could significantly affect participation.	A staggered increase in fees over three years could help mitigate the impacts. If the proposed fee increase is to be applied in a single jump, then the Council could consider introducing a discount for younger customers. Delaying the reclassification of Sundays as peak time until further assessments are carried out can also help mitigate the short-term impacts.	Paul Hendry, Countryside Manager	Participation level and impact monitoring to be completed in June and December 2026.

Disability	☐	☐	☒	Some disabled and inclusive groups, such as those involved in disability hockey, may risk losing vital opportunities if sessions become financially unviable.	A staggered increase in fees over three years could help mitigate the impacts. If the proposed fee increase is to be applied in a single jump, then the Council could consider introducing a discount for disability sports customers and groups. Delaying of the reclassification of Sundays as peak time until further assessments are carried out can also help mitigate the short-term impacts.	Paul Hendry, Countryside Manager	Participation level and impact monitoring to be completed in June and December 2026.
Gender Reassignment	☒	☐	☐				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	☒	☐	☐				
Pregnancy & Maternity	☒	☐	☐				
Race	☒	☐	☐				
Sex	☒	☐	☐				
Sexual Orientation	☒	☐	☐				

Religion or Belief	☒	☐	☐				
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	☒	☐	☐				
Areas of deprivation	☐	☐	☒	Lower-income families face increased financial barriers due to higher fees, which could make participation unaffordable.	A staggered increase in fees over three years could help mitigate the impacts. If the proposed fee increase is to be applied in a single jump, then the Council could consider introducing a discount for customers from low-income demographics or in receipt of benefits. Delaying the reclassification of Sundays as peak time until further assessments are carried out can also help mitigate the short-term impacts.	Paul Hendry, Countryside Manager	Participation level and impact monitoring to be completed in June and December 2026.
Displaced communities	☒	☐	☐				

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Care experienced people	☒	☐	☐				
The Armed Forces Community	☒	☐	☐				

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	June 2026
Person Responsible for Review	Paul Hendry, Countryside Manager
Authorised By	Kofi Adu-Gyamfi, Service Lead – Climate Change