

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 002816
Date 1 October 2018

Football Pitches

Request:

How many free to use football pitches are available to members of the public in your council area?

How many were available in each of the following years- 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018.

With response to your above questions, your request for information has now been considered and the City of Wolverhampton Council is not obliged to supply the information relating to the years 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2017 you requested for the reasons set out below.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires City of Wolverhampton Council, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states the fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies:

In relation to your particular request, the following exemption applies:

Section 12 - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

We can confirm that the Council holds information falling within the description specified in your request. However, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 allows a public authority to refuse a request if the cost of providing the information to the applicant would exceed the 'appropriate limit' as defined by the Freedom of Information.

The Regulations provide that the appropriate limit to be applied to requests received by local authorities is £450 (equivalent to 18 hours of work). In estimating the cost of complying with a request for information, an authority can only take into account any reasonable costs incurred in:

- (a) *Determining whether it holds the information,*
- (b) *Locating the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
- (c) *Retrieving the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
and
- (d) *Extracting the information from a document containing it.*

For the purposes of the estimate the costs of performing these activities should be estimated at a rate of £25 per hour.

The information appertaining to the years 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2017 is not easily accessible as no assessments were carried out in these years and as such this information is not held as a distinct set able to be retrieved or reported on. To get the information for the years 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2017 would require a full-scale look into all individual records held. This would be a manual exercise and as such we believe that the aggregated time it would take to collate the information would be in excess of 18 hours (equivalent to a notional cost of £450).

Excess cost removes the City of Wolverhampton Council's obligation under the Freedom of Information, however under Section 16 – (the duty to provide advice and assistance, the Council may be able to provide answers to the request, should you wish to submit a refined request.

However, please see below information we can supply to you relating to the years 2012, 2015 and 2018 where assessments have been undertaken. The figures supplied are for all playing pitches available for community use.

Please note that anyone who wishes to book a pitch has to pay a fee so in that sense there are no 'free to use' playing pitches.

Many pitches are, however, in parks and open spaces so the public are able to use them on an informal basis.

2012:

74 senior, 13 junior, 12 mini grass (no information on artificial grass, presumed none)

2015:

82 adult, 32 youth, 15 mini + 1 full size artificial grass

2018:

90 adult, 45 youth, 25 mini grass + 2 full size artificial grass

Differences are accounted for by not just changes in the number of pitches but by factors such as:

- Changes in their availability for community use .
- Availability of data – pitches are added or removed as information on their existence is obtained.
- Different calculation methods – some pitches outside the city boundary have been added as their function is serving demand in Wolverhampton.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

It should, however, be noted that Barnhurst Lane and Perry Hall Park playing fields were created between 2015 and 2018 and so contribute to the increase in number of pitches available.