

Fees and Charges Summary Statement

1. FEES & CHARGES

- 1.1 As part of the annual process to set the budget, the Council reviews Fees and Charges; the review assists with the delivery of budget saving targets. Many statutory service fees and charges are set by Central Government.
- 1.2 Fees and charges are informed and set according to market conditions and affordability to residents. The Council's website contains full details of all fees and charges where the Council has discretion. The Council will carefully consider all services, and examine the scope to recover some or all of the full cost (including an appropriate contribution to overheads) of service delivery.
- 1.3 Where appropriate charges will be set to maximise the contribution from charges towards service delivery, and where necessary, concessionary rates offered to those who need a subsidised service.

2. Rationale for proposed fees:

- 2.1 Each service has considered and followed the above criteria in arriving at the proposed fees for April 2016. The three main areas of consideration can be best summarised as follows:

1) Benchmarking / Market pressures:

The fees charged by Council services have been directly compared to those charged by similar providers in the public and private sector. Where the fees charged have been found on average to be of a lesser or greater value, some adjustments have been made to bring them in line with the market.

2) Rate of Inflation:

Where charges are felt to be appropriate to the current market and existing competition, a nominal increase approximate to the rate of inflation has been proposed (0.8%).

3) Cost Recovery:

Service areas were asked to look at the costs associated with the delivery of services, taking into account the full extent of resources required, including overheads and support service charges. This exercise, when combined with benchmarking, can highlight undercharging for services. Where this is found to be the case, services can justify increases greater than the rate of inflation and in

some cases the implementation of new charges. Such increases and new charges should however be justifiable and appropriate when compared to charges made by other public and private service providers and in line with the relevant legal frameworks.

Where services identify a cost subsidy in the provision of a service, in that it costs more to deliver than can reasonably be charged, they are asked to provide appropriate commentary on this.

4) Experience:

Council officers have knowledge of the local demographic area and its demands. This experience of the market has also guided proposals.

3 Fees by Service Area:

3.1 The commentaries below set out the broad approach to fees and charges in each service area.

3.2 Directorate of Environment & Neighbourhood Services

1) Sports Centres (Leisure & Recreation):

There is a proposed inflationary increase of approximately 0.8% on most fees (with figures rounded to the nearest 5/10p). The rationale for the increase is the benchmarking of charges against other service providers and the recovery of operational costs.

All free to access (subsidised) services featuring on the 2015/16 fee schedule have been retained as free within proposals for 2016/17.

The service has experienced significant transition from casual use to its newly structured and competitively priced membership packages throughout 2015/16 to date. Casual fees continue to be structured to encourage greater take up of membership packages, whilst remaining in line with other local operators.

Discounts established to permit adult football pitch hirers to pay a lesser fee for the use of facilities, in exchange for undertaking certain aspects of service provision remain and continue to be promoted. This reduces financial barriers to participation and generates equivalent efficiency savings for the Council.

2) Parks (Leisure & Recreation):

The majority of leisure related fees previously shown within the Parks schedule now feature within Leisure Services following the restructuring of services.

Allotment fees have been increased broadly by 0.8% to reflect inflation (rounded to the nearest 5/10p).

Overnight mooring fees have been increased by 2.7% from £9.25 to £9.50 for ease of charging and as a result of benchmarking.

3) Transport:

No fee increase proposed through this process.

Changes to the charge for 2nd & 3rd resident parking permits were approved through a separate process by Policy Committee for implementation from 1st February.

4) Planning:

No fee increase proposed as part of this review. Benchmarking of existing fees identifies that they remain in line with other local authorities, without scope for further increase at this time.

5) Highways:

No proposed increases to commercially sensitive Drainage Work fees in order to remain competitive.

The schedule features a number of fees set by statute, which remain unchanged.

Remaining services increased by approximately 0.8% to reflect inflation.

6) Libraries:

No increase proposed to fees to encourage continued uptake of the library service. An increase in fees at this time is felt to be counter productive and a potential barrier to service use.

7) Building Control:

No fee increase proposed through this process.

8) New Directions:

No proposed change to fees in recognition of national decline in learner numbers and to encourage increased uptake.

Format of fees has been changed to show fee per hour, permitting more accurate income forecasting.

Market comparison indicates that the fees are in line with competitors. Fees apply to the academic year September 2016 - July 2017.

9) Streetcare Services:

All fees increased by around 0.8% to reflect inflation with the exception of the fee for the carriage and tipping per tonne of waste, which has increased in line with rising landfill/waste disposal costs.

Trade Waste service operate in an extremely competitive market place in which the Council wish to grow market share. The service will continue to monitor the market and continually adjust fees in order to ensure they remain competitive and reflective of an ever changing cost base.

10) Public Conveniences:

No fee increase proposed on the basis of the existing fee being well established and in line with national practice.

11) Community Safety:

The fee for pub & club membership of the night time Town Safe scheme has been increased by 14.29%. The fee for shop/daytime membership has been frozen in order that over the next two years the fees for both services can be standardised.

Fee proposals have been calculated on the basis of cost recovery, taking in to account the associated running costs and the anticipated uptake.

12) Housing General Fund:

These charges have been increased broadly in line with inflation to reflect rising costs.

13) Regulatory Services:

A large number of fees are set by statute and no changes are proposed to these through this process.

The services have completed significant benchmarking and cost recovery analysis which has informed proposed increases, generally of between 0.8 - 8%, the majority being inflationary (0.8%).

Some commercially sensitive fees such as Food Hygiene training have been reduced by between 10 - 25% to remain competitive with the market and to permit increased uptake/growth in business.

3.3 Directorate of Support Services - Customer Services

14) Bereavement Services:

The majority of published fees have seen a nominal inflationary increase of between 0.8 - 2.5%, the fluctuation in % being brought about by the rounding of fees for ease of charging and payment. In the few instances where the increase is in excess of 3%, cost-recovery and benchmarking has informed decision making.

A number of new services have been introduced to reflect changing times and demands, through the use of modern technology. These include the Webcast of services and the provision of audio/visual recordings and photographic tributes.

All sensitive free of charge provision has been retained as free of charge within revised fees.

15) Registry Office:

A large number of fees have been frozen as a result of benchmarking with other service providers.

The fee for the approval and licensing of a venue for marriage and civil partnership has been reduced by 5% in order to encourage a greater number of venues to seek to obtain a licence.

The deposit fee for all ceremonies has been increased from £40 to £46 (15%) to reflect industry standards. This fee is deducted from the full fee on receipt of final payment. In the event of cancellation, this fee is retained by the service to cover associated administration costs. A deposit fee is standard practice amongst a number of local authorities and is proven to deter cancellations.

The balance of remaining fees have seen an increase of between 1 - 4.7% to reflect market rates as a result of benchmarking and consideration of cost recovery.

16) Customer Services (Blue Badge Scheme):

No fee increase proposed through this process; the service covers its associated costs.

17) GIS & Mapping:

The fees for the Street and Property Naming/Numbering service have been increased by 4 - 5%. This is the first time that these fees have been increased since their introduction in 2011 and revised fees result from the benchmarking of other local authority providers.

3.4 Directorate of Adult Care & Health Services

18) Adult Social Care Charges:

The charges included within this report are the charges that a self-funder or another local authority would pay for the costs of services provided by the Council.

Fees have been subject to an increase of between 0.7 - 3.26% on the basis of inflation or cost recovery.

3.5 Directorate of Children, Education & Early Help Services

19) After School & Holiday Play Clubs:

The current level of charges for after school clubs will be retained as these are largely in line with other providers/competitors.

As the charges for holiday play clubs have not increased since 2012/13 the proposed increase of 10% from 1 April 2016 is justifiable given cost pressures over the period and still represents good value.

Details of all individual charges can be found in the Finance (Budget) Section of the Council's Website.