

Synopsis of report:

To recommend the proposed fees and charges under this Committees remit for the next financial year.

Recommendation:

The proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix 'A' are approved to be effective from the dates within the appendix or as soon as practical thereafter.

1. Context of report

- 1.1 The current fees and charges were agreed twelve months ago at the committee meeting in November 2022.

2. Report

- 2.1 The Council Constitution provides delegated authority to Officers to alter fees, charges and prices without reference to Committee in order to respond to market conditions, new needs, changes in tax rates, and so on. Nonetheless, the annual review of charges still remains an important part of the overall budget setting process and the policy framework for service provision in general.
- 2.2 As part of the budget setting process, Service Managers are requested to review their charges each year. Members have previously agreed that officers put forward recommended increases based on:

- Current market conditions
- Local competition
- The likely yield of any fee increase
- On-going savings targets and revenue reduction programmes

Members have accepted that in some service areas it may not be possible to significantly increase fees, and in others it may be necessary to decrease them to stimulate demand, however in order to counteract the high levels of inflation Officers were asked to aim for an average of 8% for discretionary locally set charges where to do so would not be detrimental to the service.

- 2.3 This report reviews current levels of fees and charges, with a view to helping to balance next year's budget and is a key strand of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.4 The fees and charges proposed by Service Managers for next year are set out at Appendix "A" along with the dates that they will take effect. The appendix includes a Yield column showing the budget for each charges/group of charges, so that Members can estimate the financial implications of any price rises.

3. Resource implications

- 3.1 The main fees and charges have been increased as follows:-

3.2 Refuse Collection – Trade Waste and Domestic Waste (where chargeable).

Fees for the bulky waste collection service have been increased by approximately 8%. Trade waste disposal fees have been increased by approximately 8.25%, the administration and collection charges have not been increased, the overall fee for trade waste has therefore been increased by approximately 2 - 4%.

Fees for the sale of new bins have been increased by 8.25%, and the fees for upgrading the size of bins have increased by approximately 9%. All other fees have been increased by approximately 2 – 3%.

3.3 Halls associated with places of worship which are let out for commercial activity such as exercise classes or parties will be charged for waste collection at a 50% reduced rate.

3.4 A place of worship including any hereditament is exempt from local non-domestic rating by virtue of Paragraph 11 of Schedule 5 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 if the premises are not being used for commercial or charitable activity. If any place of worship wishes to claim exemption they will be offered the standard domestic refuse collection arrangements. One 140L waste bin, one food caddy and one 240L recycling bin. Places of worship who wish to use larger bins will be offered a 50% reduction on the standard trade rate aligned to the size of the bin required. The DSO can be contacted directly for further information.

3.5 Recycling

This service was brought in house in 2012/13, and fees for the sale of bins were introduced where applicable. A recycling service for schools and sports gyms was introduced in 2014/15; these fees have not been increased. The fees for new bins have been increased by approximately 8%.

3.6 Recycling – Green Waste

To encourage more households to sign up for this service fees have not been increased.

3.7 One off payments covering Trade, Refuse, Recycling and Green Waste.

This one off payment for each size of bin is to cover the cost of collecting contaminated bins or additional bin collections. These charges have been increased by 8.25%.

3.8 Street Cleansing - Graffiti Removal

This fee has been increased by 30.23%. The increase in the charge for the graffiti removal reflects the charge the Council has to pay external contractors through the increase in labour charges, the increase in fuel as well as the cost of chemicals/materials to remove graffiti.

3.9 Car Parks

A separate report is presented in this agenda on fee setting proposals.

3.10 Highways and Engineering

A charge for street naming and numbering was introduced in July 2012. Fees have been increased by approximately 7 – 8%.

3.11 Environmental Protection

As can be seen in the Appendix, most of these fees are set by statute and have not changed. Most discretionary fees have been increased by approximately 7 - 8%.

3.12 Animal Welfare Licences

Fees and charges were approved at the Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting on 27 September 2018, they were introduced from 1 October 2018. The fees for next year have been increased by 7 – 8%.

3.13 Community Events

The DSO are frequently asked to support a wide range of events across the Borough including sporting events, charity fund raisers, agricultural shows, and fetes. The support requested includes services such as additional grass cutting, ground works to provide locations for car parking, tree works, general site clearance and provision and collection of litter bins. To ensure fairness and transparency for Councillors, event organisers and local residents a cost recovery fee for these services for the financial year 2023/2024 has been calculated, with a view to adoption from 1st April 2023.

- 3.14 The continued success of all community events is a priority for Runnymede Borough Council and where the introduction of fees would impact on an event's viability the organisers can apply for grant aid which will normally be agreed where the objectives of the event are in accord with the Corporate Business Plan. Application forms for community events grants will be available from the Corporate Head of Community Services in advance of the introduction of these new fees.

4 Legal implications

- 4.1 Where the status of a charge is marked as 'statutory' the Council is required under the law to levy a fee. Where the status is given as 'discretionary' the Council may amend the fee charged or choose to make no charge for the service.

5 Equality implications

- 5.1 The Equalities Group recommended a screening assessment in relation to the new schedule of rates be undertaken and this is attached at 'Appendix B'. This also outlines existing charges that are relevant to equalities where mitigation is in place to ensure the Council is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

6. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 6.1 There are no direct implications from the setting of fees and charges. Environmental, Sustainability and Biodiversity implications are reviewed as part of overall service area planning and decision making,

7. Timetable for Implementation

- 7.1 The proposed fees and charges as set out in this report are to be effective from the dates within the Appendix 'A' or as soon as practical thereafter.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 High inflation is a cost to the Council as well as to our customers. Setting fees and charges is a fine balance between generating income for the Council to help support and maintain services and ensuring that the service will not be adversely affected by a drop in usage through over-pricing.

(To resolve)

Background papers

None stated