

Fees and Charges Community Services (Financial Services, Susan Faure)

Synopsis of report:

To recommend the proposed fees and charges under this Committee's remit for the next financial year, 2023/2024.

Recommendation that:

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

1. Context of report

- 1.1 The Council's 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.
- 1.2 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
- 1.3 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. Report

- 2.1 The current fees and charges were agreed at the meeting of this Committee in November 2021.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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

Community Services

- 3.1 **Careline Charges** - The Careline charge at Runnymede is currently among the most expensive in the county and there is concern that if we increase our charges we may lose customers. In order to remain competitive it is proposed that the charges are not increased this year.
- 3.2 **Chertsey Museum** - The Museum Curator has reviewed the current prices and where possible has built in an increase for the 2022/23 fees and charges. However, where it is felt necessary to stimulate or maintain demand, prices have been frozen. Due to the sheer number of different activities held at the museum, it is impracticable to list each item in this report. The full list of charges is available via the education catalogue on the museum's website. The fees and charges at the museum run in line with the school academic year and will therefore not be introduced until September 2023.
- 3.3 **Community Halls** – It is proposed the fees and charges for 2023/24 are increased by 8%.
- 3.4 **Community Meals charges** – The current charge for centre meals and meals-at-home (provided Monday to Fridays) for two courses is £4.40, and three courses £5.35. It is proposed to increase the two course meals from April 2023 by 20p to £4.60 per meal, which represents a 4.35% increase, and increase the three course meals by 25p to £5.60, which represents a 4.67% increase. It is also proposed that the cost of providing meals at weekends is increased from £5.05 to £5.5.20 for a two course meal (an increase of 2.97%), and a three course meal could be increased from £5.75 to £5.90 (an increase of 2.61%). It is also proposed that afternoon teas are increased from £2.85 to £3.00 (an increase of 5.26%) for the next financial year.
- 3.5 **Community Transport services** – Community transport are proposing to increase the cost of a day centre fare by 20p from £4.00 to £4.20, this represents an increase of 5%. It is also proposed that the cost of the dial a ride service for journeys within one zone be increased by 25p from £3.40 to £3.65 (7.35% increase) and journeys to each subsequent zone be increased from £4.00 to £4.3, which is an increase of 7.5%.
- 3.6 **Other Centre Charges** – It is proposed that fees and charges increase by 8%. Hairdressing salons in all centres increased by 20p to £7.90 per hour. It is proposed that the full day fees for the Chiropodist is increased by £1 from £29.00 to £30.00 an increase of 3.45%
- 3.7 **Safer Runnymede** – It is proposed that Safer Runnymede fees and charges are increased by 8%.

Operational Parks and Open Spaces (Managed by Environmental Services)

- 3.8 **Allotments** - Under the terms of their leases, allotment holders must be informed of any increases in charges twelve months before they take effect. Therefore, charges from April 2023 were set by this Committee in October 2022. It is now proposed that the charges for 2023/2024 be increased by 50p to £21.00 per 25m² (rod) per annum and for those paying by annual direct debit from £17.90 to £18.30. There is a 50% abatement where social prescribing is applicable.
- 3.9 **Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards** – on average it is now proposed to increase fees by 8% and further details can be found in Appendix 'A'.
- 3.10 **Parks and Open Spaces** – Various levels of charge increase and decreases have been set to reflect and stimulate demand. Details of specific charges can be found in Appendix 'A.' There is a new proposed annual fee for team use of the parks for training as opposed to the current hourly rate to encourage greater use. This reflects prices charged by other Surrey district councils.

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 Where any changes to the structure of any charging regime are proposed which have the potential to have a negative or positive impact on anyone with a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (as amended), an Equality Impact Assessment will have been completed by the relevant Budget Manager.

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 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.