

This Report will be made public on 7 December 2021

Report Number **C/21/55**

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 December 2021
Status: Key Decision
Head of Service: Charlotte Spendley, Director of Corporate Services
Cabinet Member: Councillor David Monk, Leader

SUBJECT: FEES AND CHARGES 2022/23

SUMMARY: This report focuses on the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23 which will contribute towards meeting the council's 2022/23 budget objectives and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council's Fees and Charges Policy was revised and agreed by Cabinet on 15 November 2017 (Report C/17/54).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet agreed the recommendations set out below because the fees and charges are essential to support the delivery of the MTFs and Budget Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/21/55.
2. To approve:
 - (i) The 2022/23 fees and charges which are set at the discretion of the council for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, as outlined in Appendix 2;
 - (ii) The parking charges in Appendix 3;
 - (iii) The statutory charges subject to discretionary charges in Appendix 4.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Fees and Charges Policy sets out the Council's charging framework. The Policy is outlined within Appendix 1 in full. It is felt that the policy remains relevant and no changes to the policy are proposed at this time.
- 1.2 The proposal for 2022/23 is to apply the CPI rate at June 2021 (2.5%) as the benchmark for price increases. There are exceptions to this principle where an inflationary increase is anticipated to have an adverse impact on demand or where it would place the charge out of line with comparable services in neighbouring councils.
- 1.3 The proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2022/23 are detailed at Appendices 2 to 4.

2. DISCRETIONARY FEES AND CHARGES – APPENDIX 2

2.1 Corporate Services

- 2.1.1 Court Costs – no increase proposed as no summonses issued in 2020/21 to base calculation on so would be difficult to justify an increase in costs.
- 2.1.2 Legal Fees – proposed increases are broadly in line with inflation however, some fees have been increased by more than 2.5% to recover costs and the proposed charges are still reasonable minimum charges. A new charge of £50 for Notice of Subletting is proposed following a new work stream that has generated income for the service.

2.2 Housing & Operations

- 2.2.1 Long Lease Renewals – it is proposed to increase the admin fee from £216 to £225 due to a 20% increase in the contractor valuation fee, and to increase the Title Plan admin fee by 20% to £180.
- 2.2.2 Housing – Non Statutory Inspection Fee increased from £127.50 to £153 based on officer time spent on inspection and letter generation.
- 2.2.3 Leaseholder Services – new charges have been added to the schedule which were not previously included within the payment structure; Lease Enfranchisement £225 per case; Sewage/Pump Station Management Fee £110 per property; Leasehold Management Fee (Leasehold/Shared Ownership/HRA Commercial) £220 per property.
- 2.2.4 All HRA resident charges to be increased by inflation rate in line with the agreed policy. Rent setting will be considered separately through the January HRA Cabinet paper and is not subject to these inflationary increases.

2.3 Operations

- 2.3.1 Parking Services – no increase proposed for Provision of White 'Access' Road Markings as the charge is in line with KCC.

- 2.3.2 Public Toilets – the charge for Dymchurch Sea Wall toilets is to be removed as the toilets are no longer coin access due to the failure rate of the doors and excessive repair timeframes.
- 2.3.3 Outdoor Sports and Recreation – wording has been changed to make charges generic (includes all football pitches) and Cricket and Mini Soccer charges have been removed as we no longer have these facilities.
- 2.3.4 Beach Huts – charges added for existing chalets at Marine Parade and new chalets to be developed at the Littlestone site.
- 2.3.5 Corporate Transactions – new charge proposed for Administration Fee for Sale of Land and Property of £335 which is in line with the Housing charge.
- 2.3.6 Memorial Benches & Trees – proposed increase of 10% due to a 7.5% increase in the cost of supply of goods from the manufacturer in 2021/22 and expected increases over the next financial year. A new charge of £755 has been added for the Cost of Planted Memorial Tree.
- 2.3.7 Private Lifeline – there are small increases proposed for some equipment due to an increase in costs, however it is recommended that there are no increases for the majority of charges so that the service remains competitive when compared with other providers. A new charge has been added for Smart Hub (new equipment) of £5.40 per week.

2.4 Place

- 2.4.1 Planning Pre-Application Charging Schedule – all fees are proposed to increase by 3.2% to reflect true costs of services and bring fees in line with other councils.
- 2.4.2 Waste & Recycling – it is proposed to add inflation to all waste charges except Bulky Waste charges which will remain at 2021/22 charges and Green Waste Collection which will remain at 2021/22 rates for new subscribers and reduce by £9.70 for renewals to reflect the agreed rebate for the suspended 2021/22 service (as agreed by Cabinet in October, C/21/38).
- 2.4.3 Hythe Swimming Pool – most charges are proposed to increase by inflation apart from Spectator Admission and Annual Membership costs where no increase is proposed to encourage increased numbers and the Adult (Front Crawl) Training Session fee has been realigned with other classes. The charge for Swimming – Off Peak is proposed to be removed to encourage people towards taking out memberships.
- 2.4.4 Taxi Licensing – most fees are proposed to increase by inflation with the exception of Copy/Amend Paper Licence fees which are set by legislation.
- 2.4.5 Miscellaneous Licensing – it is proposed that Street Trading Licences are increased by inflation but that charges for Market Stalls remain at 2021/22 rates and are a set fee all year round to encourage more usage. There are new

charges proposed for Commercial Hire of Town Centre of £180 per day and Pavement Licenses of £100 for licenses issued up to September 2022.

- 2.4.6 Caravan Site Licensing – a new fee of £203 is proposed for Application for Fit and Proper Person Register - Mobile Homes as required by Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person (England) Regulations 2020.
- 2.4.7 Cemeteries – most fees have been increased by inflation. Amendments to the schedule are proposed to remove the Deed of Grant fee included within the Person over 12 – Purchase Fee as the Deed of Grant fee is listed separately, and to add the £207 fee for Digging Fees – Children between 5-12 which was not previously listed.

3. PARKING CHARGES 2022/23 – APPENDIX 3

- 3.1 For Off-Street parking an increased hourly rate of 20p to £1.40 is proposed for the majority of car parks and to cap all day parking charges to £8.40, previously £8.00.

Exceptions to this are Sandgate Road and Castle Road and Wilberforce Road in Sandgate where it is proposed to increase fees by 50p across all tariff bands.

It is proposed to introduce a charge in West Hythe in line with other charges (£1.40 hourly rate).

No changes are proposed for charges for Church Road or Lower Sandgate Road and no change to for car park season tickets to encourage more uptake.

- 3.2 Car Park Resident Permits are proposed to increase by £5 to £65
- 3.3 For On-Street parking there is a proposed increase of 30p per hour to £1.50.
- 3.4 Proposals for Permits are Hotel Guest Vouchers to increase by £1 to £3 per 24 hour period; Resident Parking Permits to increase by £5 to £35; Resident Visitor Permits to increase by 80p for 5 sessions to £6; and Business Parking Permits to increase by £5 to £65.
- 3.5 Parking Permissions for Window Cleaners etc, are proposed to increase by £5 to £65.
- 3.6 The daily charge for Parking Waivers is proposed to increase by £2 to £10 and the weekly charge by £6 to £30.

4. STATUTORY CHARGES SUBJECT TO DISCRETIONARY FEES – APPENDIX 4

- 4.1 Housing – proposed increases for Licensing Application for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Fees have increased significantly but have been benchmarked against other East Kent authorities and proposed fees are middle of the range. The fee for Renewals is proposed to increase from £584 to £796

and the fee for New Applications is proposed to increase from £714 to £937. The fees are based on officer time spent on processing applications. It is also proposed to remove the Additional Fee per unit over 8 as the fee is applicable regardless of the number of units. The increase in New and Renewal fees will mitigate the removal of the Additional Fee.

- 4.2 Land charges – following comparison with other local authorities no increases are proposed except for the Local Land Charge Basic Research Fee and Official Search and Basic Research Fee for requests Submitted via NLIS which are to increase with inflation.

5. 2022/23 GENERAL FUND BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The following budget changes have been proposed though the Budget Strategy document also being considered at this meeting in respect of income budgets. Additionally there are a few smaller income adjustments reflected in the Budget Strategy position through the base budget review. Several of these adjustments however are reflective of current trends rather than proposed changes to the fees & charges schedules.

The increase comprises:

	£
Increased income:	
Parking (Off-Street)	170,470
Parking (On-Street)	53,970
Miscellaneous Licensing	6,080
Housing (HMO Fees)	5,000
Street Naming & Numbering	3,180
Caravan Licensing	1,400
Other	100
Net	240,200

6. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGES

Charges for Wastewater Treatment Works and Pumping Stations

- 6.1 The 2021/22 Fees and Charges report highlighted that the HRA subsidises the cost of this service. As in previous years, Cabinet agreed to limit increases on the charge for this service for existing users to annual increases of 8% in 2021/22 where users of the service were already paying the maximum charge of £1,020 per property. Users whose charge was lower than this would continue to pay the actual cost of the service up to the capped maximum amount. Cabinet has also previously agreed that new purchasers of properties, who buy under the 'Right to Buy' scheme, pay the actual cost of wastewater treatment works and cesspools.

The increase to the capped charge takes it from £1,100 in 2021/22 to £1,180 in 2022/23.

Cesspools

- 6.2 In 2021/22 the same principle of the council recovering its costs up to a maximum of £1,100 for each household has previously been approved for the 7 council-owned properties which drain to cesspools. This produces annual income of £7,700. The cost of the service in 2020/21 was £12,385 and if the cost is about the same in 2021/22 the HRA would be subsidising the service by approximately £4,685. In line with the above, it is recommended that the cap remains at the already approved figure of 8% per annum for 2022/23 taking the annual charge to £1,180.
- 6.3 Garage Rental deposit proposed increase from £40 to £100 to encourage the return of garages in good condition. This charge has not previously been on the fees & charges schedule and will be added for 2022/23.
- 6.4 The charge for Hire of Scooter Store is proposed to increase by 20% to £3 per week based on the increase in energy prices (for charging scooters).
- 6.5 It is proposed to increase the charge for Guest Rooms - Sheltered Accommodation by £2 per night based on the fee being low in comparison to any other accommodation.
- 6.6 A new Item Collection fee (per instance) has been introduced of £75 charged to the tenant for collection of an item removed from a communal area.
- 6.7 The budget implications of these changes will be reflected in the Housing Revenue Account and Capital Original Budget 2022/23 report to Cabinet in February 2022.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 7.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Income targets are not achieved resulting in a budget deficit	High	Medium	All fees and charges and income budgets are reviewed in detail each year to ensure that they are reasonable and achievable.

8. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

- 8.1 **Legal Officer's Comments (NM)**

As a general rule, the Council is under a duty to act fairly in its decision-making, including exercising its discretion to increase relevant fees and charges. The Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a wide ambit of power to charge for its services and section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 gives the Council capacity to charge for relevant services; on the basis it is doing so without 'trading' (or making a profit).

8.2 Finance Officer's Comments (CI)

The financial implications are set out in the report.

8.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications

The budget report to Full Council in February 2022 will include an Equality Impact Assessment of the budget recommendations for 2022/23.

8.4 Climate Change Implications

As this report only presents the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23 there are no climate change implications arising from it.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting.

Cheryl Ireland, Chief Financial Services Officer
Tel: 01303 853213
E-mail: cheryl.ireland@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Budget working papers

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Fees and Charges Policy

Appendix 2 - Discretionary Fees and Charges Schedule

Appendix 3 – Parking Schedule

Appendix 4 - Statutory Fees Subject to Discretionary Charges Schedule

General Fees and Charges Policy

All fees and charges are subject to the following general policy.

1. There shall be full cost recovery so that general council taxpayers are not subsidising the costs of an optional service. Any exceptions to this rule can only be agreed by cabinet. Where there is a substantial change between the current charge and the full cost recovery amount, the increase can be staggered over a period of up to three financial years.

In addition:

2. Fees and charges are increased by the current rate of inflation (generally rounded up to the nearest 10p).

The main exceptions to this rule are:

- Court fees
- Room bookings at the civic centre – voluntary organisations
- Car parking – as subject to review in the Car Park Strategy
- Building control – subject to full cost recovery of building control chargeable element.
- Contract charges with other organisations which are subject to separate negotiations
- Commercial activities - where fees and charges need to respond to market conditions or their ability to compete effectively for tenders. These will be discussed with the relevant portfolio holder at the appropriate time but will be on the basis of covering all costs at a minimum.
- Statutory charges - over which the council has no control and will be introduced as per the respective guidance and will not be subject to this policy