

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Decision Made: 21 December 2022

Fees and Charges 2023/24

Issue for Decision

This decision sets the proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 for all services. Fees and charges determined by the Council are reviewed annually, and this forms part of the budget setting process. Changes to fees and charges agreed will come into effect on 1 April 2023 unless otherwise stated.

Decision Made

That

1. The Fees and Charges as set out in the appendices 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the report be approved for use in the next round of budget making; and
2. That plans for exploring further opportunities for fees and charges relating to Legal Services, Moorings, Parking, and the Town Hall, be reported to the January 2023 Executive meeting.

Reasons for Decision

- 1.1 The council is able to recover the costs of providing certain services through making a charge to service users. For some services, this is a requirement and charges are set out in statute, and in other areas the council has discretion to determine whether charging is appropriate, and the level at which charges are set.
- 1.2 In recent years, the use of charging has become an increasingly important feature of the council's medium term financial strategy, as pressures on the revenue budget limit the extent to which subsidisation of discretionary services is feasible. Recovering the costs of these services from users where possible helps to ensure sustainability of the council's offer to residents and businesses, beyond the statutory minimum.
- 1.3 A charging policy (attached at Appendix 2 to the report for reference) is in place for charges which are set at the council's discretion and this seeks to ensure that:
 - Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
 - Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which

should be considered when reviewing charges.

- Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
- Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

1.4 The policy covers fees and charges that are set at the discretion of the council and does not apply to services where the council is prohibited from charging, e.g. the collection of household waste. Charges currently determined by central government, e.g. planning application fees, are also outside the scope of the policy. However, consideration of any known changes to such fees and charges and any consequence to the medium term financial strategy are included in this report for information.

1.5 Managers are asked to consider the following factors when reviewing fees and charges:

- The council's strategic plan and values, and how charge supports these;
- The use of subsidies and concessions targeted at certain user groups or to facilitate access to a service;
- The actual or potential impact of competition in terms of price or quality;
- Trends in user demand including an estimate of the effect of price changes on customers;
- Customer survey results;
- Impact on users, both directly and on delivering the council's objectives;
- Financial constraints including inflationary pressure and service budgets;
- The implications of developments such as investment made in a service;
- The corporate impact on other service areas of council wide pressures to increase fees and charges;
- Alternative charging structures that could be more effective;

- Proposals for targeting promotions during the year and the evaluation
- of any that took place in previous periods.

Discretionary Charges for 2023-24

- 1.6 It is important that charges are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate and keep pace with the costs associated with service delivery as they increase over time.
- 1.7 Charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee have been reviewed by budget managers in line with the policy, as part of the development of the medium term financial strategy for 2023/24 onwards. The detailed results of the review carried out this year are set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 1.8 Table 1 below summarises the 2021/22 outturn and 2022/23 estimate for income from the discretionary fees and charges which fall within the remit of this committee. Please note that the table only reflects changes relating to fees and charges and does not include other budget proposals which may impact these service areas.
- 1.9 The overall increase in income if these changes are agreed and implemented as planned is expected to be £2,800 which amounts to a 2.04% increase in the budgeted income figure for this committee for the current financial year.

Fees and Charges

Service Area	2021-22 Outturn	2022-23 Estimate	Proposed change in income	2023-24 Estimate
	£	£	£	£
Legal Services	108,687	57,200	2,800	60,000
Street Naming & Numbering	67,205	73,350	0	73,350
Town Hall	415	1,500	0	1,500
Maidstone House (staff parking)	1,517	4,910	0	4,910
Total income from charges set by the Council	177,823	136,960	2,800	139,760

Table 1: Discretionary Fees & Charges Summary

- 1.10 Detailed proposals are set out within Appendix 1 to this report, and considerations relating to these proposals have been summarised below.
- 1.11 Legal Services – The fees and charges for legal services are based on recovering the cost of the service. Consideration is also given to the maximum recoverable costs per hour for court work in this area, which are set by the Ministry of Justice. The most significant cost pressure for legal services is salaries which represent the biggest proportion of the

expenditure budget. The hourly chargeable rate is the same across all three authorities in the partnership.

- 1.12 Street Naming and Numbering – The fees and charges have been increased to reflect significant increase in costs of providing these services and that they were not increased last year. These fees and charges are in line with other Kent Authorities. No changes are proposed to the budget as the income is under recovering at this stage.
- 1.13 Town Hall – The fees and charges have been increased to reflect significant cost increases of providing these services having not been increased since 2015 and therefore have increased by a higher percentage than usual. No changes are proposed to the budget as the income is under recovering at this stage.
- 1.14 Maidstone House (Charge for paying customers) – No changes are proposed to these charges at this stage.

Statutory Fees & Charges

- 1.15 Table 2 below summarises the income due from fees which are set by the government. No changes are anticipated to these charges which are set centrally by government departments.

Service Area	2021-22 Outturn £	2022-23 Estimate £	Proposed change in income £	2023-24 Estimate £
Mid Kent Enforcement Service	758,189	905,700	130,300	1,036,000
Total income from charges set externally	758,189	905,700	130,300	1,036,000

Table 2: Statutory Fees & Charges Summary (P&R)

- 1.16 An increase in income from compliance and enforcement fees is anticipated as activity increases. This operates as a shared service, the income is gross and the net profit is shared equally between the authorities.

Strategic Overview

- 1.17 The Executive will consider the overall impact of all fees and charges on the council's residents and businesses. A summary of these changes is provided below, with the detail set out within Appendices 3-5. Overall, the anticipated impact of all the proposals represents a small increase (2.9%) on existing gross income budgets. This information excludes fees for licensing, which will be reported to the Licensing Committee for approval.

Service Area	2020-21 Actual £	2021-22 Estimate £	Proposed change in income £	2022-23 Estimate £
Parks and Open Spaces	10,678	17,510	0	17,510
Cemetery and Crematorium	1,685,281	1,497,160	98,700	1,595,860
Environmental Health	19,405	18,020	4,080	22,100
Waste Crime & Community Protection	14,706	26,900	0	26,900
Recycling & Refuse Collection	1,482,840	1,410,530	16,100	1,426,630
HMO Licensing	35,023	20,380	0	20,380
Gypsy & Traveller Sites	57,621	70,340	3,520	73,860
Total income from fees set by the Council	3,305,554	3,060,840	122,400	3,183,240

Table 3: Discretionary Fees & Charges Summary (CHE)

Service Area	2021-22 Outturn £	2022-23 Estimate £	Proposed change in income £	2023-24 Estimate £
Economic Development (Jubilee Square)	175	3,500	0	3,500
Market	0	0	0	0
Museum	34,230	44,400	0	44,400
Total income from fees set by the Council	34,405	47,900	0	47,900

Table 4: Discretionary Fees & Charges Summary (ERL)

Service Area	2020-21 Outturn £	2021-22 Budget £	Proposed change in income £	2022-23 Estimate £
Parking Services	3,366,460	3,164,500	0	3,164,500
Sandling Road Car Park	61,319	53,470	0	53,470
Land Charges	299,058	286,900	0	286,900
Building Control	456,912	401,510	20,080	421,590
Development and Conservation Control	1,525,860	1,457,410	0	1,457,410
Grand Total	5,709,609	5,363,790	20,080	5,383,870

Table 5: Discretionary Fees & Charges Summary (PI)

1.18 Policy Advisory Committee Feedback

In considering the report the feedback provided via Lead Members from each Policy Advisory Committee meant that an extra resolution has been included for further work to be done on areas that Policy Advisory Committees, with Lead Members, felt should be explored further.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

Option 1

Approve the fees and charges as proposed in the Appendices to the report. As these proposals have been developed in line with the council's policy on fees and charges, they will create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising income levels.

Option 2

Approve alternative charges to those set out within the appendices to the report. Any alternative increases may not be fully compliant with the policy, would require further consideration before implementation and may not deliver the necessary levels of income to ensure a balanced budget for 2023-24. The impact on demand for a service should also be taken into account when considering increases to charges beyond the proposed level.

Option 3

Do nothing and retain charges at their current levels. However, this might limit the Council's ability to recover the cost of delivering discretionary services and could result in the Council being unable to set a balanced budget for 2023-24.

Option 1 is the chosen option as the proposed fees and charges shown within the Appendices to the report have been developed by budget managers in line with the Council's Charging Policy. The proposed charges are considered appropriate and are expected to create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising cost recovery. Changes to fees and charges agreed will come into effect on 1 April 2023 unless otherwise stated. Additional resolutions have been included to those set out in the report to take into account the feedback from Policy Advisory Committees on Fees and Charges opportunities to explore.

Background Papers

None

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: _____
Leader of the Council

Full details of both the report for the decision taken above and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#)

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm 4 January 2023**