

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

14 February 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Pitch fee increase in respect of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller sites

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing & Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore
Lead Officer and Report Author	Nigel Bucklow
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The Committee agrees the proposed percentage pitch fee increase of 2.5% for the Council- owned Gypsy and Traveller sites to commence from 3rd April 2017

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Communities, Housing & Environment Committee	14 th February 2017

Pitch fee increase in respect of the Council's Gypsy and Traveller sites

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider an increase of 2.5% in the pitch fees for the two Gypsy and Traveller sites at Stilebridge Lane, Marden and Water Lane, Ulcombe with effect from 3rd April 2017

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is able to increase pitch fees under the Mobile Homes Act 1983. The Council's agreement with the tenant states the fee can be reviewed at the 1st April but may introduce the charge at anytime, so long as there is no more than one increase during the financial year. The pitch fee levels for the two Council owned sites have not been increased since April 2015.
- 2.2 In line with government advice to public sector landlords the pitch fee should not be increased by more than the annual change in the Retail Price Index (RPI) reported in the previous 12 months. The Council is required to give at least 28 clear days' notice of the alteration to the occupier. For the purpose of determining the relevant date of the RPI change the Council have considered the most recently published RPI data available ahead of this committee date.
- 2.3 The percentage increase of 2.5% was selected by reference to the RPI data published by The Office of National Statistics on 17th January 2017 for the 12 month period ending December 2016(the period considered to be closest to the notice date).
- 2.4 The effect of the proposed increase is set out below:

	Current pitch fee	New pitch fee	Annual Increase
Stilebridge Lane Marden	£48.92 per week per pitch	£50.14 per week per pitch	£1141.92
Water Lane Ulcombe	£56.89 per week per pitch	£58.31 per week per pitch	£1033.76

NOTE

Annual increase is based on 18 pitches at Stilebridge Lane, Marden and 14 pitches at Water Lane, Ulcombe.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 That the Housing and Community Services Committee agrees the percentage pitch fee increase (2.5%) for the Council owned gypsy sites as set out earlier to commence from 3rd April 2017.
- 3.2 The Council could choose not to adopt the increase in the pitch fee. Agreeing the recommended increase will help to maximize the recoverable income from the sites.
- 3.3 The Council could decide to increase the pitch fees by a different percentage increase. This is not recommended as a larger increase will be open to challenge by the residents of the sites and difficult to justify outside the guidance of the Mobile Homes Act 1983. A lower increase would not maximize the fee income for the sites.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Housing and Community Services Committee agrees the percentage pitch fee increase (2.5%) for the Council owned gypsy sites as previously set out to commence from 3rd April 2017. Agreeing the recommended increase will help to maximize the recoverable income from the sites and is within the guidelines of the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 None required

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The Council is required to give at least 28 days' notice to the occupiers of the sites of any alteration to the pitch fee. The residents of the sites will be notified in writing, as this is a statutory requirement, and followed up by our managing agent with visits as required.
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7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities		Head of Housing & Community Services
Risk Management	There is a small risk that the increased pitch fees will not be paid by the site residents who do not receive full housing benefit and whose income has not increased in line with RPI. This risk is considered to be extremely small as a high percentage of the residents receive housing benefit. If the pitch fees do not increase the Council will be less likely to maintain the site to an acceptable standard.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Financial	Contained within the report	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing		[Head of Service]
Legal		[Legal Team]
Equality Impact Needs Assessment		[Policy & Information Manager]
Environmental/Sustainable Development		[Head of Service or Manager]
Community Safety		[Head of Service or Manager]
Human Rights Act		[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement		[Head of Service &

		Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management		[Head of Service & Manager]

8. REPORT APPENDICES

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS