

**Fees & Charges 2021-22**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Mark Green, Director of Finance & Business Improvement
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2021/22 for the services within the remit of this committee. 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 by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2021 unless otherwise stated in the report.

**Purpose of Report**

The committee is requested to agree the proposed charges for 2021-22, for the areas in which these can be set at the council's discretion (discretionary fees and charges).

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the proposed discretionary fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report are agreed.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	15 December 2020
Policy & Resources Committee	16 December 2021

# Fees & Charges 2021-22

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, the Council's policy on charging has been developed to support corporate priorities as set out in the strategic plan and the proposals within the report have been made with reference to this.</li> </ul>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report recommendations support the achievement of the cross cutting objectives by ensuring that costs of service delivery are recovered where possible, which enables services which support these objectives to be sustained.</li> </ul>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
<b>Risk Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is covered within section 5 of the report.</li> </ul>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial implications are set out in the body of the report. If agreed, this income will be incorporated into the Council's medium term financial strategy for 2020-21 onwards.</li> </ul>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
<b>Staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not have any staffing implications.</li> </ul>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
<b>Legal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out within the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011.</li> </ul> <p>Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 permits best value authorities to charge for discretionary services provided the authority has the power to provide that service and the recipient agrees to take it up on those terms.</p>	Principal Solicitor (Corporate Governance)

	<p>The authority has a duty to ensure that taking one financial year with another, income does not exceed the costs of providing the service. A number of fees and charges for Council services are set on a cost recovery basis only, with trading accounts used to ensure that the cost of service is clearly related to the charge made. In other cases, the fee is set by statute and the Council must charge the statutory fee. In both cases the proposals in this report meet the Council's legal obligations. Where a customer defaults on the fee or charge for a service, the fee or charge must be defensible, in order to recover it through legal action. Adherence to the MBC Charging Policy on setting fees and charges provides some assurance that appropriate factors have been considered in setting such fees and charges.</p>	
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not have any privacy or data protection implications.</li> </ul>	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.</li> </ul>	Policy & Information Manager
<b>Public Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not have any public health implications.</li> </ul>	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not have any crime &amp; disorder implications.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not have any procurement implications.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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. All charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee are set at the council's discretion.
- 2.2 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.

2.3 A charging policy (attached at Appendix 2 for reference) is in place for charges which are set at the council's discretion and this seeks to ensure that:

- a) 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.
- b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.
- c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
- d) 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.

2.4 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.

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

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

- j) Alternative charging structures that could be more effective;
- k) Proposals for targeting promotions during the year and the evaluation of any that took place in previous periods.

### **Proposed Fees & Charges for 2021-22**

- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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 2021/22 onwards. The detailed results of the review carried out this year are set out in Appendix 1 and the approval of the committee is sought to the amended discretionary fees and charges for 2021/22 as set out in that appendix. It can be seen that only minor changes are recommended given the impact of Covid-19 on most sources of income.
- 2.8 Table 1 below summarises the 2019/20 outturn and 2020/21 estimate for income from the fees and charges which fall within the remit of this committee.
- 2.9 The overall change in income if these changes are agreed and implemented as planned is expected to be -£28,557 which amounts to a 5.93% decrease on the overall budgeted fees and charges income figure for this committee for the current financial year. Note that this change arises primarily from a change in the volume of activity rather than price changes. The budgeted income levels have been provided for context to assist with consideration of fees and charges. They should be treated as indicative at this stage, and may be subject to change as the medium term financial strategy develops.

### **Fees and Charges**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>2019-20 Outturn</b>	<b>2020-21 Estimate</b>	<b>Proposed change in income</b>	<b>2021-22 Estimate</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Museum	58,676	64,600	-1,600	63,000
Business Terrace	68,523	84,980	-8,498	76,482
Business Terrace Expansion	183,467	184,590	-18,459	166,131
Jubilee Square	4,593	3,500	0	3,500
Market	113,373	143,840	0	143,840
<b>Total income from fees set by the Council</b>	<b>428,632</b>	<b>481,510</b>	<b>-28,557</b>	<b>452,953</b>

Table 1: Fees & Charges Summary (ERL)

- 2.10 Detailed proposals are set out within Appendix 1 to this report, and considerations relating to these proposals have been summarised below.
- 2.11 Business Terrace & Business Terrace Expansion – No changes are proposed to the fees and charges in this area at this time, given the instability which the Covid 19 pandemic has caused within this sector of the market. This approach is intended to support business start-ups (including new tenants) into Covid 19 economic recovery. Furthermore, since demand for workspace has reduced significantly since lockdown in March it is important to ensure that charges in this area remain competitive. Reductions in income are anticipated for 2021/22 due to the decline in demand for office space, limits on lettable areas brought about by social distancing measures and the increased risk of irrecoverable debts.
- 2.12 Museum – No changes are proposed to the existing charges at the museum. Changes to the approach to delivering this service, including options for charging were considered at a previous meeting of this committee. Work in this area is ongoing and the impact of these changes has not been reflected in the budget figures shown for next year.
- 2.13 Market & Jubilee Square – Minor changes are proposed to charges in this area, with a view to rationalising the pricing structure. At this stage it is proposed that the majority of charges remain at their current level in order to support the future viability of the market.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

#### **3.1 Option 1**

The committee could approve the recommendations as set out in the report, adopting the fees and charges as proposed in Appendix 1. 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.

#### **3.2 Option 2**

The committee could propose alternative charges to those set out within Appendix 1. 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 2021-22. The impact on demand for a service should also be taken into account when considering increases to charges beyond the proposed level.

#### **3.3 Option 3**

The committee could choose to 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 2021-22.

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#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1 as set out above is recommended as the proposed fees and charges shown within Appendix 1 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 by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2021 unless otherwise stated.
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#### **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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#### **6. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Current and Proposed Fees & Charges – ERL Committee
  - Appendix 2: Charging Policy
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#### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None