

Fees and Charges 2023-24

Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 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 2023 unless otherwise stated in the report.

Recommendation to Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee that:

1. The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to comment on the content.
2. The Committee recommend to the Executive to approve the Fees and Charges as detailed in Appendix 1

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee	8 December 2022
Executive	21 December 2022

Fees and Charges 2023-24

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	Head of Finance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	Head of Finance
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is covered within section 5 of the report. 	Head of Finance
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	Head of Finance
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not have any staffing implications. 	Head of Finance
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting on the recommendations is within the Council’s powers as set out within the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011. 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. 	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and 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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
Privacy and Data Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendations do not have any privacy or data protection implications. 	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendations do not have any public health implications. 	Head of Finance
Crime and Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendations do not have any public health implications. 	Head of Finance
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendations do not have any procurement implications. 	Head of Finance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

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.
- 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. 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.
- 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
- l) of any that took place in previous periods.

Discretionary Charges for 2023-24

- 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 2023/24 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 fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out in that appendix.
- 2.8 Table 1 below summarises the 2021/22 outturn and 2022/23 estimate for income from the 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.
- 2.9 The overall increase in income if these changes are agreed and implemented as planned is expected to be £20,080 which amounts to a 0.37% increase in the overall budgeted income figure for this committee for the current financial year.

Fees and Charges

Service Area	2021-22 Outturn	2022-23 Budget	Proposed change in income	2023-24 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 1: Fees & Charges Summary (PI)

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 Parking Services – No changes are proposed to the charges in this area for the next financial year as this service and the local economy continues to recover from the impact of the pandemic. The off-street parking charges for town centre car parks proposed for have been compared to charges at non-MBC car parks (see table below) and are considered to represent value for money.

Tariff	Fremlin	Fremlin (Sat)	Mall	Lock- meadow (MBC)	Medway St (MBC)	King St (MBC)
1hr	£2.50	£3.80	£2.00	£1.00	£1.30	£1.35
2hr	£3.00	£3.80	£2.00	£2.00	£2.60	£2.70
3hr	£3.60	£6.30	£3.50	£2.50	£3.90	£4.05
4hr	£4.60	£6.30	£3.50	£3.50	£5.20	£5.40
5hr	£6.00	£10.60	£4.50	£5.00	n/a	n/a
Over 5hr/6hr	£11.20	£11.70	£9.00	£7.00	n/a	n/a
Overnight	£2.10	£2.10	n/a	No charge	£2.00	£2.00

Table 2: Town centre parking charges comparison – short stay

2.12 Land Charges – Search fees are set by central government and no changes are currently anticipated for the next financial year. It is proposed that the discretionary charges in these areas remain at their current level for 2023/24.

2.13 Building control – Moderate inflationary increases are proposed for building control charges. It is anticipated that this may generate additional income of £20,080 which will be reinvested in the service.

2.14 Development Control & Conservation – No inflationary increases have been applied to the discretionary charges in this area. It is proposed that the discretionary charges in these areas remain at their current level for 2023/24.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1

The Committee could recommend approval to adopt 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 2023-24. 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 2023-24.

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 recommended by this committee will go to the Executive for approval and will come into effect on 1 April 2023 unless otherwise stated.

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.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 No consultation has been undertaken specifically relating to the proposals set out in the report. However, the Council has conducted a Budget survey of residents which will be used to inform wider decisions related to budget setting and spending priorities. The results of this survey will be considered as part of the budget process.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee will receive an overarching report of all fees and charges proposals on 14 December 2022.
- 7.2 Proposed changes to fees and charges will go to the Executive on the 21 December 2022 for approval as set out within Appendix 1 and will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2023.
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8. 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 – PI PAC
 - Appendix 2: Charging Policy
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None