

Report To:	CABINET	Date:	27th JANUARY 2020
Heading:	FEES AND CHARGES 2020/21		
Portfolio Holder:	COUNCILLOR DAVID MARTIN – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

Each year the Council reviews its Fees and Charges as part of setting its Annual Budget. In doing so it considers levels of service demand, inflation and how fees and charges in Ashfield compare with neighbouring Councils. Any increases aim to cover, as a minimum, the inflationary cost of service provision. Increases in fees and charges also contribute to closing the funding gap (the planned expenditure for the year less the resources available to fund that expenditure).

The Council has also adopted a Commercial Enterprise Strategy for Ashfield, of which one of the aims is to 'develop and grow business initiatives and maximise the return from our trading services.' The income from this is to support the Council as it continues to face funding pressures and increasing service demand.

Provisional Fees & Charges proposals have been included in the draft Budget currently being prepared for 2020/21.

All fees and charges discussed in the report are contained within the Council's Fees and Charges booklet.

Recommendation(s)

Agree the revised Fees & Charges proposals for 2020/21 with all applicable increases taking effect as soon as practically possible after 1 April 2020.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Additional income generated will meet the inflationary costs of service provision and contribute towards the Council's saving targets and continue to support the financing of a range of services to Ashfield residents and businesses. In addition, an annual review of fees and charges is part of sound financial management practise and a requirement of the Council's Financial Regulations.

Alternative Options Considered (With Reasons Why Not Adopted)

Where applicable, alternative options are presented for consideration.

Detailed Information

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with sound financial practice, it is already a requirement to undertake an annual review of fees and charges. This exercise is carried out as part of the budget process each year.

APPROACH

Managers have been asked to consider and propose revised fees and charges taking into account the following factors.

- i) Market conditions;
- ii) Increases in costs incurred by the Council in delivering the service;
- iii) Charges levied by the private sector where applicable;
- iv) Restrictions due to any contractual arrangement.

Some fees and charges are set by the Government. As the Council is unable to amend these charges they are excluded from the review.

PROPOSALS BY DIRECTORATE

Proposed fee revisions are shown in the remainder of the report by Directorate. These are summarised in the 2020/21 fees and charges booklet attached to this report as Appendix 1.

PLACES AND COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE

Planning

Planning fees are set by legislation so cannot be varied as part of this review.

Land Charges

These charges are discretionary but have to remain competitive with the market as a similar (but generally satisfactory for most needs) service can be obtained from personal search companies.

Following the previous review when the Council revised commercial fees in line with the residential product, fees are now split into two categories:

- 1) Full search – which comprises an LLC1 and CON29R.
- 2) Individual enquiries – The price for these has been individually set to take into account the work required to prepare the response.

Some increases are proposed for individual CON29 enquiries (+10%).

Commercial Rents

There are individual agreements for all commercial premises and these agreements dictate when a rent review is due. The rent proposed for each unit is dependent upon the current market values for comparable premises in similar areas and there is only scope for an increase if at the point of rent review or lease renewal, market values are higher than those currently being paid.

Street naming and Numbering

There are no plans to raise charges for 2020/21.

Markets

Price resistance continues to be a significant issue for Markets, with occupancy levels fluctuating and traders seeking towns offering the greatest footfall.

The Authority continues to offer a number of initiatives to improve occupancy at our markets and use our added value events to promote our towns to new traders, and shoppers alike. Nationally Market traders are reducing, and the Council is not immune to this trend.

Indoor Markets

Indoor Market charges are set on a commercial basis and current charges have been developed in parallel with the capital investment in the Sutton Indoor Market.

Licences, Registrations, Permits and Consents

A large proportion of the licences, registrations and permits issued are statutory so pricing structures are prescribed. For licences, registrations and permits that are discretionary, fees are set to cover the costs of providing the service. Such licence fees are monitored with the aim of achieving full cost recovery. This includes reviewing processes to reduce processing time, increasing fees if necessary and looking at charging for activity that is not currently charged for where it is appropriate to levy a charge for this activity.

A number of licences relating to Animal Boarding establishments have been revised from one year to three year licences.

Pest Control Fees and Charges

The Pest Control service has had notable success in attracting business from outside of the District. In order for the service to become self-financing a two tier increase is proposed, 5% within Ashfield, and 10% outside of the District, reflecting the additional costs of travelling.

Dog Control Fees

Part of the Dog Control fee is statutory, and the rest of the charge is set by the Council. A previous review showed that an increase in fees was likely to result in the loss of fee paying customers. No rise is planned for 2020/21.

Penalty Notices

These are fees associated with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Fees are mostly set by the Government although the Council does have some discretion in respect of early fee payment. The fee is in line with that charged by neighbouring authorities so there are no proposals to change the early payment fee at this point. Details of these charges can be found in the attached booklet.

Cemeteries

Cemetery fees and charges were reviewed and increased accordingly in 2017/18 to bring them closer in line with neighbouring Authorities. The proposed changes for 2020/21 will see Ashfield maintain this position. A number of miscellaneous charges in respect of such things as late arrival on site and transfer of exclusive rights have been included. Ashfield is one of the few Councils that has not previously imposed such charges, and the proposed fees are low compared to other Authorities.

Leisure Centres

The fees for the Leisure Centres are set by the contractor Sports and Leisure Management Ltd (SLM), as long as they remain within the parameters of the overall contract and the Council is consulted on proposals.

SLM are free to set prices within the parameters of the prevailing Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) % rate (September of the previous year for all CPI %), however, if they wish to exceed CPI, the Authority's consent is required.

MOT tests

The price is currently £40 for a class IV test, £45 for a class VII test and £10 for a retest. These prices are comparable with local competition and it is not intended to increase them.

Trade Waste

Under the Environmental Protection Act, the Council is obliged to provide a commercial waste collection service if requested by local businesses and can make a 'reasonable' charge for the service. The Council aims to provide a quality and reliable service which is efficient and highly valued by our commercial customers. The Trade Waste prices for 2020/21 have been proposed, including a charge for a recycling service. As Trade Waste charges are commercially sensitive these have been excluded from the Appendix to this report.

Special Collections (Bulky /domestic items)

Small increases are proposed for the collection and disposal of Bulky waste items.

Garden Waste

For 2020/21 it is proposed to retain these at the same levels as for 2019/20, i.e. £28 for the subscription, and £14 for each additional bin.

Parks and Outdoor Recreation charges

Various rises are proposed. These are detailed in the attached Appendix.

HOUSING AND ASSETS

Car Parking Fees

Revised parking charges are due to be implemented on 18th May 2020, when the new Parking Order becomes effective. The proposed increases for Parking permits fall outside of the Parking Order.

Community Centres

The facilities provided by Community Centres are well received by the community groups that utilise them but occupancy rates do vary from centre to centre and are low in some cases, therefore affecting income levels. Some small increases are planned for 2020/21.

Private Sector Call Monitoring Service

This is a non-statutory service, first established by Ashfield Homes, and run on a commercial basis. It is not proposed to increase these charges.

RESOURCES AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION DIRECTORATE

Council Tax and Business Rates court costs for summons and liability orders. If a charge payer does not pay their Council Tax or Business Rates despite an issue of a final notice, the next stage of recovery is Magistrates' Court action to summons and seek a liability order so that further recovery action can be taken.

Councils are allowed to add their costs to this process which is recoverable from the charge payer. There are no plans to increase these costs in 2020/21.

Mansfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee

The above Joint Crematorium is owned jointly by Ashfield, Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood District Councils. For the purposes of profit sharing, Ashfield's share stands at around 40%.

The proposed fees for 2020/21 have not yet been determined by the Joint Committee.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE

S106 agreement fees are proposed at £1,000. A number of new legal fees are proposed. These are detailed in the attached Appendix. These minimum recovery and charge out rates will apply in all cases unless an exception applies. Where a particular case is complex and the time spent on the matter exceeds the minimum charge set, the Council will charge the hourly rate of the Fee Earner working on the case. All costs associated with litigation matters will be recovered using the hourly rates of the Fee Earners set out in the Appendix. Unless itemised in the Appendix or otherwise agreed in advance, all other external or third party work, excepting those areas where there are charging prohibitions or protocols in force, will be charged on an hourly basis at the rates given in the Appendix.

The fees relating to providing copies of Electoral Registers are proposed to remain at current levels.

Corporate Plan:

Income from fees and charges support delivery of priorities in the Corporate Plan.

Legal:

All fees need to be set within the constraints of any relevant legislation.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	The impact of the revised fees and charges will be reflected in the update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Budgets set for 2020/21.
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	The impact of the revised fees and charges will be reflected in the update to the HRA Business Plan and the HRA Budgets set for 2020/21.

Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A
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Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Where fees and charges have increased there is a possibility of an adverse impact on demand.	Any proposed increase in fees and charges is deemed reasonable and the potential impact on demand has been considered when determining the proposed revised fees. Performance against 2020/21 budgeted fees and charges income targets will be monitored throughout the year with any variations to budget being reported to CLT and Cabinet.

Human Resources:

No direct HR implications arising from the report.

Equalities *(to be completed by the author):*

No direct equalities implications arising from the report.

Other Implications:

None

Reason(s) for Urgency (if applicable):

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

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