

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2021-22

Executive Summary

It is the Council's policy to review its discretionary fees and charges at least once a year.

Schedules of proposed charges for 2021/22 are attached at Appendix 1 (People), Appendix 2 (Place), Appendix 3 (Us) and Appendix 4 (Rhoda McGaw Theatre).

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

the discretionary fees and charges, as set out in Appendices 1 – 4 of the report, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The regular review of discretionary charges ensures that the Council maintains its income base and generates additional resources for the provision of services.

The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council.

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Leigh Clarke, Finance Director Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3277
Contact Person:	Leigh Clarke, Finance Director Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3277
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Simon Ashall Email: cllrsimon.ashall@woking.gov.uk
Shadow Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Deborah Hughes Email: cllrdeborah.hughes@woking.gov.uk
Date Published:	13 November 2020

Review of Fees and Charges 2021-22

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with Council Policy, fees and charges which are at the discretion of the Council are reviewed at least annually.
- 1.2 The fees and charges for 2020/21 were approved by the Council on 5 December 2019 and the forecast yields were incorporated in the budget approved by the Council on 6 February 2020.
- 1.3 As was the case when the 2020/21 fees and charges were agreed, service areas have been asked to look at ways of increasing yield through increased activity, revised charging or new charging opportunities.
- 1.4 Schedules of proposed charges for 2021/22 are attached at Appendix 1 (People), Appendix 2 (Place), Appendix 3 (Us) and Appendix 4 (Rhoda McGaw Theatre).
- 1.5 The Council's "Strategy for Applying and Setting Fees and Charges for Services" sets out a broad and transparent approach to setting fees and charges. All charges are reviewed against this strategy and charges will be set in line with the framework outlined.
- 1.6 A commentary on any specific service issues arising from the review follows. The name of the relevant Officer contact has also been provided.

2.0 People

- 2.1 The services delivered by our communities teams are increasingly important and effective in supporting residents to live at home independently. In order to put these services on a sustainable footing and provide quality services that residents need, some increased charges are required, particularly where charges have not been increased for two years or more. The council will continue to look at how it integrates these services further to reduce costs and keep increases in charges to a minimum.

Centres for the Community – Hires and Membership (Adam Thomas) (Appendix 1)

- 2.2 There is no proposal to increase the hire costs of the rooms at the Centres for the Community. The Centre Managers recently completed a benchmarking exercise and the rates were deemed to be reasonable and in line with other local providers. This will support hirers to access the buildings and use them for community benefit, in line with the health and safety guidance at the time.
- 2.3 This year we would like to formally end the Centres membership scheme. This is considered to be a dated system that is no longer fit for purpose; whereby customers often worry about their renewals and staff struggle to administer a complicated system. A universal, 'pay as you go' approach would be more inclusive and clearer for staff, volunteers and customers. Staff will be able to better engage with new customers who can feel comfortable and welcome to use the Centres without feeling the pressure of having to sign up to a scheme.
- 2.4 Currently, customers pay £10 per year to be a member and this enables them to have a discounted meal every time they visit the Centres. Historically, the scheme was linked to wider leisure and retail offers, however, this benefit has not worked for many years and is now non-existent. In line with our health and wellbeing priorities, the offer of the Centres promotes healthy living and active sessions, in partnership with local leisure providers. Therefore, the focus on health and wellbeing remains a key priority regardless of a membership scheme.
- 2.5 The new proposed lunch prices are detailed in the Community Meals section of this report. There is a slight increase in cost for day-care users (customers requiring low to medium care

Review of Fees and Charges 2021-22

support from Council staff). However, it should be noted that day-care customers only pay for their transport and lunch and therefore there is no additional cost for the care provided to them from the Centre Assistants when they visit for the day. The offer is therefore very affordable.

- 2.6 From the Council's perspective, removing the membership allows us to continue to provide care and support to vulnerable residents, however we simplify the systems and enable staff to spend less time on complex admin tasks and more time engaging with customers. Currently, customers who are not members pay £6 for a two course lunch, members pay £5 and day-care customers or customers receiving benefits pay £4.20. This is very confusing for staff and volunteers taking orders and then handling cash and coding the finances accordingly. It is also confusing for customers.
- 2.7 Regarding income, the membership scheme overall creates a financial loss to the Council when off-set with the current lunch prices. Therefore the new lunch rates enable us to slightly reduce the annual loss, whilst still providing a highly affordable and accessible offer to customers.

Community Meals (Ashley Harden-Boyle) (Appendix 1)

- 2.8 The Community Meals Service is a vital service for many elderly and disabled residents of Woking and continues to grow its customer base year on year.
- 2.9 The menu offer has been adapted over the past 12 months and will continue to change to offer variety and flexibility. Frozen meals are now being delivered alongside the hot lunch service to ensure client's needs are met and charged the same rate as the hot lunch service. This means we are able to deliver meals to clients who may have to attend appointments or would prefer to cook the meals themselves later in the day.
- 2.10 The past 12 months has seen a drastic increase in the number of people needing assistance from the Meals Service, especially through the pandemic which doubled the number of clients at its peak. Community meals currently delivers 1197 meals a week, a 39% increase from pre pandemic time with 210 regular clients.
- 2.11 The cost in relation to food and resources needed to maintain the service has increased annually by at least 5%. There are still price uncertainties due to how Covid and Brexit will impact and potentially cause additional price increases.
- 2.12 The Council's current lunch and frozen charge of £4.00 remains the lowest across Surrey, with only Spelthorne offering a service at the same price.
- 2.13 The 2020/2021 charges from Surrey district and boroughs are:

Review of Fees and Charges 2021-22

Council	Cost Lunch 2020/21
Epsom and Ewell	£4.95
Mole Valley	£5.20
Elmbridge	£4.80
Runnymede	£4.40
Surrey Heath	£4.10
Guildford	£4.40
Waverley	£6.50
*2021/22 charges are not known but expected to increase. All D&B use the same supplier.	

- 2.14 Woking Council has not increased meals charges since 2017.
- 2.15 With the cost pressures and uncertainties in running the meal services it is proposed to increase lunch and frozen meal charges to £4.40 to assist in covering costs and maintaining the service.
- 2.16 The demand for tea time meals has significantly increased. The menu offer has improved and many clients mix this option alongside hot lunches. We are now able to offer 3 meals a day for those that may need it.
- 2.17 The tea and breakfast charge has not increased since the service was introduced and currently stands at £1.00 for breakfast and £2.00 for tea.
- 2.18 It is proposed to increase these charges for 2021/22 to £1.10 for breakfast and £2.20 for tea.
- 2.19 For an additional charge extra fruit, drinks and soups to help promote hydration and nutrition which are deliverable with a meals service or as a once a week drop.
- 2.20 Service users at Community Centres, Brockhill and the soon to be open Hale End Court are provided with 2 course lunches as are local organisations such as Surrey Choices.
- 2.21 As described above in the Centres for the Community section, the membership of the Centres for the Community is proposed to be removed as it is no longer fit for purpose. A new lunch rate that is the same for all customers will allow for a wider demographic of customers to enjoy the space and a system whereby this can be processed simply by staff and volunteers. A new rate of £5.50 for a two course lunch, which includes the care from Centre staff for the time spent at the premises is proposed. This rate will be the same for all users who wish to purchase lunch.
- 2.22 The lunch club rate is charged to organisations requesting our meals for their clients e.g. Woking Surrey Choices Sites. It is proposed to also increase the lunch club rate to £5.50.

Brockhill (Julie Meme) (Appendix 1)

- 2.23 It is not proposed to increase the Guest Room fees as this was substantially increased last year and it is seen as a vital offer for some relatives to visit tenants during the pandemic.
- 2.24 It is not proposed to increase the hire charge for hair dressing as with COVID precautions the hairdresser is unable to have as many clients as before.

Homelink (Helen Kempell) (Appendix 1)

- 2.25 Homelink is part of the NW Surrey Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Hub with Spelthorne and Runnymede BC's. Woking takes the lead role designed to provide a more consistent approach across the area and to provide efficiencies and savings in service provision.
- 2.26 Homelink now operates the Handyperson service in these three boroughs and also Surrey Heath. The proposed Handyperson charges will apply across all boroughs. Any income generated will benefit Woking and goes back into the running of the Handyperson service.
- 2.27 The majority of the work carried out by the Handyperson service is to assist hospital discharge and to enable residents to remain safe and secure in their homes for as long as possible. There is no charge to the residents for this type of work. The volume of this type is ever increasing due to the aging population and our growing ties with Adult Social Care, NHS and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) through the Integrated Care Partnership and so the time available for chargeable DIY work is diminishing.
- 2.28 The Covid crisis has meant that we are having to pay increased costs for some items due to lack of material/equipment supply.
- 2.29 The Handyperson Service is part funded by the Better Care Fund and the grant for 20/21 remained the same as the previous year. Funding for following years has not been confirmed. Other funding comes from a capital grant and an HIA revenue grant yet to be confirmed for 21/22.
- 2.30 The proposed increase in Handyperson charges are recommended to increase the ability of the service to become self-financing in the long term and provide resilience in the current uncertain climate.
- 2.31 The NW Surrey Hub has agreed to maintain the management fee to carry out major disabled adaptations at 15% of the adaptation cost for the majority of works. Any increase reduces the amount available to spend on the actual adaptation work.

Careline (Julie Meme) (Appendix 1)

- 2.32 Woking Careline provides a holistic service for residents: rather than simply sending alarm equipment out to clients in the post as many private suppliers do, Careline officers install the equipment in the clients home. In doing so the Careline officer carries out a range tests in each room in the house and is able to look for potential trip hazards and problems in the home. Clients can be referred to other services such as the Handy Person service and dementia services all of which support people to live at home independently. The team are qualified Trusted Assessors for adaptations and equipment which speeds up the process for clients as occupational therapists reports/recommendations are not always required. The advantage of the Careline service is also the Falls Responder service where our staff are able to assist clients who have fallen but have no injuries instead of waiting for an ambulance.
- 2.33 Our charges are therefore higher than some private market suppliers of alarm equipment such as Age UK, Saga, Boots. It is becoming evident that Woking residents are shopping

Review of Fees and Charges 2021-22

around the market with greater use of internet searching and it will therefore be important to clearly communicate to clients how the Careline service offer is far more comprehensive.

- 2.34 The charges vary across all Districts and Boroughs in Surrey, Elmbridge charge the lowest at £3.92 pw and the highest is Epsom and Ewell at £4.96. The current Woking charge is £4.27 full rate and £3.15 for those in receipt of means tested benefits. Woking is only one of 2 Councils in Surrey that has the split rate. It is intended to gradually move towards a one charge system.
- 2.35 Woking's charges have not increased for 2 years. Forestcare our call centre provider have increased their charges by over 50% this year. It is proposed to increase the full charge to £4.70 pw and £4.00 pw for those in receipt of a means tested benefit.
- 2.36 During the pandemic it was important to be able to continue to install alarm equipment for new clients and at the same time minimise the risk to staff visiting. Where it was known that there would be a logistical problem with the physical installation of the equipment, e.g. lack of electrical sockets / phone points or resident in isolation having just been discharged from hospital, an easy solution was required. OwnFone is an alternative personal alarm, similar in size to a small mobile phone that is worn around the neck. It works using a SIM card and has to be regularly charged. Like the traditional alarm the OwnFone will work within home and garden and when activated will connect to Forestcare Alarm Centre in the normal way. Clients are given the option at the end of their trial whether to keep the OwnFone or revert to the normal alarm.
- 2.37 It is proposed to introduce a new charge for the OwnFone at £ 4.50 pw.

Independent Support Services (Julie Meme) (Appendix 1)

- 2.38 The Independent Support Service was introduced to replace the Home Support Service to provide a tenure neutral service for our most vulnerable, elderly and disabled residents of the Borough based on the resident's individual needs and not where they live.
- 2.39 The service was aimed to support any resident of the borough to live independently at home as long as possible in a safe and secure environment. The tenure neutral service being based on the individual needs which may change over time and will be flexible to cover periods of crisis i.e. hospital discharge, illness or bereavement.
- 2.40 Due to the pandemic this service has not been fully implemented so it is not proposed to increase any charges for 2021/22.

Leisure Management Contract (Steve May) (Appendix 1)

- 2.41 The pandemic has had a significant impact on Freedom Leisure, the Council's leisure services provider. Facilities were closed for the national lockdown in March and it was only possible to gradually re-open over the summer. The subsequent closure this month is a further set back. It has been necessary for the Council to provide support to Freedom Leisure over this period due to limited or no income for several months.
- 2.42 Charges for 2021/22 have been proposed in consultation with the Leisure Partnership Board and reflect the need to maintain income levels to provide a sustainable service going forward.
- 2.43 Swimming prices have been on hold for the past couple of years due to refurbishment works. The increases now proposed are more than inflation due to the improved facilities but when compared to other facilities in Surrey are still very good value for money. In particular our concession pricing structure offers the best value across all of the Surrey. Only marginal increases are proposed for many of the gym charges.

3.0 Place

Waste and Recycling and Garden Waste (Geoff McManus) (Appendix 2)

3.1 There are no proposals to increase the charges during 2021/22, although Joint Waste Services continue to look at potential alignment of charges across the four authorities (Woking, Surrey Heath, Elmbridge and Mole Valley).

Car Parks (Geoff McManus) (Appendix 2)

3.2 There are no proposals to increase off street tariff increases during 2021/22.

3.3 With the introduction of a new car park management system many new payment options will shortly be available whilst retaining the traditional ability to pay by cash although the drive is to contactless and on line payments for convenience and efficiency.

3.4 It is the intention to transfer all existing registered disabled motorists onto the new parking system. For renewals or new applications a £15 administration charge will apply for the full term of the disabled persons blue badge.

Resident Car Park Season Tickets

3.5 With the introduction of new parking systems it is proposed to make available a standard discounted residents car park permit for town centre residents at a cost of £780 per year allowing car park access at all times.

3.6 For qualifying applicants (typically residents living within the CPZ zone 1 boundary) an auto renewal process will be available at £65 per month.

3.7 If a second permit is required for a household, the options would be a standard priced permit or a residents off peak car park permit at £170 per year.

Public Season Tickets

3.8 It is also proposed to change all public season tickets to monthly auto renewal which makes it more convenient for the user and more efficient for parking services.

Band C example	Monthly	Quarterly	Annual
Proposed monthly fee	150	n/a	n/a

Corporate Season Tickets

3.9 Separate arrangements will remain in place for companies who require large numbers of season tickets.

Controlled Parking Zones (Geoff McManus) (Appendix 2)

3.10 There are no charging proposals for 2021/2022. Any new proposals would normally originate from Woking Joint Committee and Surrey County Council acting as the highway authority for Woking.

Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

- 3.11 Companies and members of the public may approach the Council from time to time, requesting information under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) as defined in the CON29 Standard Enquiries of Local Authorities. The EIR provides for public access to environmental information held by public authorities on any property / site / land that falls within the Local Authority's remit. We are able to make a charge for the time and resources that is involved in gathering the information requested, which tends to be on pollution related data. A fee of £175.00 will be charged for providing information requested under EIR.

Fishing Permits (Tracey Haskins) (Appendix 2)

- 3.12 The Goldsworth Park Angling Club continues to provide management services at both Goldsworth Park Lake and Brookwood Ponds. In consultation with the Angling Club no increase in charges are proposed for 2021/22 and arrangements continue to work well.

Street Trading

- 3.13 Street trading charges have been replaced with a £100 fee for 3 months under the new covid19 related Planning laws. This continues to be a temporary arrangement and we will revert to 12 month licences when appropriate.

Building Control (David Edwards)

- 3.14 The current Building Control fees and charges will continue to apply until such time as a review is undertaken.

4.0 Us

Local Land Charges (David Ripley) (Appendix 3)

- 4.1 There is no proposal to increase the Woking BC element of Local Land Charge fees. The income received against the costs incurred in the previous 3 years indicate the fee levels are set correctly. Over a 3 year cycle the fees received and costs incurred should be neutral. The increased fees levied by Surrey County Council will be reflected in the fees published on the Council's website for Local Land Charge searches. The trend in 2020/21 is difficult to forecast due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the Government stopping house moves. This reduced search demand, however activity is starting to pick up again.
- 4.2 Some Con 29 Part 1 searches are submitted as requests under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 i.e. under the "Freedom of Information" regime. The fee for dealing with these requests (calculated in accordance with statutory provisions) is £175.00.
- 4.3 It is expected that Local Land Charges will transfer to the Land Registry during 2021/22. All income has therefore been removed from the budget from 1 April 2021.

Taxis and Private Hire (Jo McIntosh) (Appendix 3)

- 4.3 A modest increase is proposed in respect of the fees and charges schedule for taxi licensing. The Licensing Department is currently running at a deficit and fees have not been increased for numerous years. It should be noted that it is anticipated that these increases will reduce the deficit but there will still be one. Given the current climate and regeneration in the Town Centre it is considered that a gradual increase to fees is more appropriate than a substantial increase immediately.

5.0 Implications

Financial

5.1 The changes in fees and charges considered in this report are summarised in the following table. It is forecast that there will continue to be a significant reduction in activity in car parks during 2021/22 as the impact of the pandemic continues. This is reflected in the projected yield from charges and so is shown separately in the table.

	Budget 2020/21 £	Estimated Yield 2021/22 £	Change in Yield £	Change in Yield %
People	970,242	1,063,997	93,755	9.7
Place – Car Parking	8,438,324	5,221,308	-3,217,016	-38.1
Place - Other	1,779,435	1,780,415	980	0.1
Us	391,054	433,872	42,818	10.9
Total	11,579,055	8,499,592	-3,079,463	-26.6

5.2 Not all of the fees and charges income in the table above will directly affect the overall position in the Council’s General Fund budget also on this agenda. There will also be associated increases in costs for some services where activity has increased.

Human Resource/Training and Development

5.3 This review forms part of the annual work plan of staff in the Council’s service areas. No specific training and development issues have arisen as a result of the review.

Community Safety

5.4 There are no Community Safety implications as a result of this report.

Risk Management

5.5 Where there is a risk that the levels of income proposed by this review will not be achieved, this will be identified in the 2021/22 budget reports and monitored during the year in the Green Book.

Sustainability

5.6 There are no sustainability implications in the report.

Equalities

5.7 There are no equalities implications in the report.

Safeguarding

5.8 There are no specific safeguarding implications as a result of this report.

6.0 Consultations

- 6.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Freedom Leisure and the Leisure Partnership Board on the 'core' and 'non-core' charges for the Leisure Management Contract.
- 6.2 The Goldsworth Park Angling Club has been consulted on the proposed charges for Fishing.
- 6.3 Consultation has taken place with the Woking Drama Association and Ambassadors Theatre Group in respect of the proposed charges for the Rhoda McGaw Theatre.

REPORT ENDS