

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2023-24

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 2023/24 are attached at Appendix 1 (Communities), Appendix 2 (Place), Appendix 3 (Corporate Resources) and Appendix 4 (Rhoda McGaw Theatre).

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) **the discretionary fees and charges, as set out in Appendices 1 – 4 of the report, be approved;**
- (ii) **delegated authority be given to the Green Infrastructure Manager and Strategic Director - Place, in consultation with the Greener Woking and Planning and Regulation Portfolio Holders, to finalise the proposed street naming and numbering fees before implementing these from 1 April 2023;**
- (iii) **delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director – Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulation, to revise charges for the stray dogs service following the commencement of the new service contract to be effective from 1 January 2023; and**
- (iv) **delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director – Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulation, to agree charging fees in respect of electric vehicle charging.**

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.

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Background Papers: None.

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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 2022/23 were approved by the Council on 2 December 2021 and the forecast yields were incorporated in the budget approved by the Council on 10 February 2022.
- 1.3 As was the case when the 2022/23 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. This process has been considered alongside the Council's Fit for the Future efficiency programme and has focussed particularly on those areas where charges are below comparable rates and where the cost of providing the services is not recovered.
- 1.4 Schedules of proposed charges for 2022/23 are attached at Appendix 1 (Communities), Appendix 2 (Place), Appendix 3 (Corporate Resources) 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 Communities

Housing Standards (Jacqui Dixon)

- 2.1 Housing Standards is a statutory service responsible for ensuring that private rented and sometimes housing association stock in the borough meets minimum property standards. The team aims to work informally with landlords through education but has powers to enforce where persuasion has failed or if there is an immediate danger.
- 2.2 The Housing Standards Team administers and enforces the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licences and the Canalside area Selective Licensing scheme. The Selective Licensing scheme ends in March 2023, it does not automatically renew in April 2023. Officers recommended to the Executive that a new scheme is not proposed and should be replaced by an Amenity Standard to cover the whole borough.
- 2.3 For 2023/24 it is recommended that all fees increase by 10%. Fees increased for the first time in 5 years in 2022/23 and the 2022/23 fees are in the lower half of HMO application fees in Surrey.

District and Borough	2022/23 standard HMO fee
Guildford	£912
Spelthorne	£776
Mole Valley	£728.78
Reigate & Banstead	£730
Waverley	£665

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Woking	£660
Runnymede	£650
Elmbridge	£600
Tandridge	£450
Surrey Heath	unknown

- 2.4 No increase to fees has been proposed or activity has been forecast for Selective Licensing fees in 23/24 due to the Executive agreeing not to apply for a new Selective Licensing scheme in 2023/24.
- 2.5 The total reduction in income is due to the end of Selective Licensing scheme, however as noted in the Selective Licensing Review EXE22-060 report the lifetime cost of the scheme far outweighed the income.
- 2.6 Predicted MEES income has reduced from the previous year due to the limitations of enforcement action and focus on landlord education. The MEES funded project has now ended and will become part of the day to day Housing Standards work.
- 2.7 A new £50.00 fee has been introduced for a landlord not attending a pre-arranged appointment with the Housing Standards team. This is to encourage landlords not to waste Officer time and to appreciate the seriousness of the investigations to be undertaken.

Community Meals Service - Julie Meme

- 2.8 The Community Meals Service is a vital service for many elderly, vulnerable and disabled residents of Woking. There are two elements to the service:
- Community Meals Delivery Service
 - Lunch and café provision in Community Centres and extra care schemes (Brockhill and Hale End Court)
- 2.9 Community Meals is a discretionary service and receives only £25,649 pa funding from SCC via a Service Level Agreement to provide the service.

Community Meals Delivery Service

- 2.10 Community meals currently delivers 1424 meals a week and finished 21/22 with an overall 18.7% increase in growth for all meals from 20/21 with 199 regular clients. For lunch time meals there was a 16.6% increase.
- 2.11 The menu offer has been adapted over the past 12 months and will continue to change to offer variety and flexibility to cater for all health needs. Community Meals now has a varied client base with an increase in clients with complex support needs due to mental health, alcohol, or drug related issues.
- 2.12 The Community Meals Service is more than a meal. By regular and often daily contact with our most vulnerable and isolated residents our staff can monitor their client's health and condition of the home and make the necessary referrals to other services and agencies to get involved when needed. Many of our clients have no family or visitors other than the Meals

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Delivery Officer, our officer might be the only person they see, therefore reducing isolation and relieving pressures on other services. Most client's properties are entered by keysafe and lunch is plated up and presented to the client as they have severe mobility issues. The charge for a meal must therefore remain affordable and cost should not be a barrier to our most vulnerable residents.

- 2.13 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 can deliver meals to clients who may have to attend appointments or would prefer to cook the meals themselves later in the day. The service is flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of the client.
- 2.14 The past 12 months has seen a consistent number of residents needing assistance from the Meals Service, many clients remaining with the service who joined in the pandemic.
- 2.15 The cost in relation to food and resources needed to maintain the service has increased annually. There are still price uncertainties due to how the cost of living, fuel and food prices will impact and potentially cause additional price increases. Apetito is the contracted food supplier and their price % increases over the past two years are shown below.

Apetito Price increase	
Year	Meal increase
2023	???
2022	9.8%
2021	2.3%

- 2.16 The Apetito 9.8% price increase in April 2022 (notified March 22) effectively wiped out the 10% price increase agreed by the Council last year and did not enable the deficit to be reduced in providing the service.
- 2.17 The Council's current two course lunch and frozen charge of £4.84 remains low across Surrey, with only Spelthorne, Guildford, Runnymede and Surrey Heath offering a service at a lower price. All District and Boroughs use the same supplier for the meals.
- 2.18 The 2022/2023 charges from some Surrey district and boroughs are:

Council	Cost Lunch 2022/23	
	Weekday Price	Weekend Price
Epsom and Ewell	£5.25	£5.25
Mole Valley	£5.80	£5.90
Elmbridge	£5.40	£5.50
Runnymede	£4.40	£5.05
Surrey Heath	£4.40	£5.35
Guildford	£4.50	£4.50
Spelthorne	£4.00	£4.00
Tandridge	no service	no service
Woking	£4.84	£4.84

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Reigate and Banstead	no service	no service
Waverley	£7.00	£7.00
*2023/24 charges are not known but many are expected to increase.		

- 2.19 Woking does not have a different charge for weekend delivery although the staffing costs are higher which is why some D&Bs charge more. An option is to start charging more for weekend meals.
- 2.20 By introducing an additional 10p weekend charge for main lunch meal only at current client numbers and price could increase income by £2,070 pa with no additional costs. The introduction of a 10p increased weekend rate is recommended for lunch meal only.
- 2.21 The past 18 months costs have been exceptional. The pandemic did increase the number of clients, but it also significantly increased staffing costs and transportation in addition to food prices rising sharply. Prior to 2021/22 the charges for meals had not been increased for four years. Now the cost of food, fuel etc continues to rise.
- 2.22 The predicted deficit for the meals delivery service for 2022/23 is expected to be approx £82,000. Considerable efficiencies have recently taken place, both in processes and staffing and further changes are planned to further reduce the deficit. Different models of delivery are also being considered with partners and neighbouring authorities.

The Community Meals Delivery Service is discretionary and is subsidised.

Financial Year	Income Delivery Service	Expenditure	Staffing plus on costs	Deficit
2019/20	£200,026	£163,276	NA	
2020/21	£311,518	£128,499	NA	
2021/22	£285,444	£171,562	£202,288	£88,406
Est 2022/23	£280,000	£170,152	£192,015	£82,167

- 2.23 The past few years have been challenging for the meals delivery service. Although the pandemic saw a large increase in clients there were associated additional staffing, vehicle, food and fuel costs. Now with the “cost of living crisis” again food costs, fuel and increased staffing costs are making an impact on the viability of the service. There is uncertainty on client numbers going forward, but a marketing campaign and promotional offers are planned for this winter to increase up take.
- 2.24 In April 2023 the current meals delivery van contract ends. Procurement work is already under way to consider more cost-effective models of delivery with the intention to move away from the diesel vans to hybrid electric cars delivering via hot boxes. Current evaluations of other service models have provided us with an estimated saving of £18,000 per annum, if we move over to the hybrid model, but this is yet to go through procurement. This will reduce costs further from 2023.
- 2.25 An increase in meals cost is recommended to reduce the deficit and start moving towards the Community Meals Service covering its costs.
- 2.26 The table below indicates the potential increased income from the differing percentage price increase options, with the bottom row showing income, with the likely 10% increase in costs from the supplier.

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Meal Type	Current Price	5% price increase	10% price increase	15% price increase	20% price increase
2 course Main	£233,946.00	£245,643.30	£257,340.60	£269,037.90	£280,735.20
Tea bag	£37,659.07	£39,542.02	£41,424.98	£43,307.93	£45,190.88
Breakfast	£2,272.80	£2,386.44	£2,500.08	£2,613.72	£2,727.36
Total	£273,877.87	£287,571.76	£301,265.66	£314,959.55	£328,653.44
Additional income generated	0	£13,693.89	£27,387.79	£41,081.68	£54,775.57
Additional income take away apetito raise in prices by 10%	0	£3,493.89	£17,187.79	£30,881.68	£44,575.57

2.27 The table below indicates the new charges if a 5%,

10%, 15% or 20% increase is applied.

Community Meals Delivery Price Increase 23/24					
Meal Type	Current Price	5% increase	10% increase	15% increase	20% increase
2 course lunch	£4.84	£5.08	£5.32	£5.57	£5.81
Tea	£2.42	£2.54	£2.66	£2.78	£2.90
Breakfast	£1.21	£1.27	£1.33	£1.39	£1.45

2.28 It is therefore recommended to increase the meals charges by 20% to reduce the deficit and bring the cost of a meal in line with other D&B services.

Lunch and Café Provision at Community Centres and Extra Care Scheme

2.29 Historically the Community Meals Team provided food in all community centre dining rooms and cafes. This model has changed in order to reduce costs and discussion are on going with the voluntary/private sector to transfer the responsibility of all the kitchens and cafes in the Community Centres to them, making further cost savings to the community meals service and expanding the offer for residents. This model has already proved successful, with the transfer of St Marys kitchen and café to Freshstart CIC in September 2022 and Moorcroft to Dramatize from 2 January 2023. Discussions are underway with partners considering taking on The Vyne café.

2.30 Since the pandemic clients requiring meals at the centres have not returned in the same numbers. This plus food and fuel costs have made taking on the cafes uncertain for the voluntary sector.

2.31 Whilst the meals at The Vyne are still provided in house, the cost of a two course hot lunch for extra care and those residents arriving via community transport is recommended to also increase by 20% from £5.50 to £6.60 per meal. The two course meal at the venues for day visitors not using Woking Community Transport would also increase by 20% from £6.60 to £7.92 per meal.

Centre Lunch Price Increase					
Meal Type	Current Price	5% increase	10% increase	15% increase	20% increase
The Vyne lunch (come by Bustler) or extra care	£5.50	£5.78	£6.05	£6.33	£6.60
Any Other User	£6.60	£6.93	£7.26	£7.59	£7.92

Careline - Julie Meme

- 2.32 Careline is a vital service for our residents who need extra reassurance to enable them to live independently at home.
- 2.33 As of 1st September 2022 there were 1,087 Careline clients. In Woking. There are currently 2 rates of weekly rental charges:
- £4.94 full rental - 845 clients
 - £4.20 reduced rental for those clients in receipt of means tested benefits - 242 clients
- 2.34 2021/22 saw the first increase (10%) in charges for 4 years.
- 2.35 The predicted income for 2022/23 is £216,996 from full rental clients and £52,852 from those on means tested benefits totalling £269,818. Income should exceed expectations but the trend over the past six months is that we have more cancellations mostly due to death and moving to care homes than new clients so there is a downward trend in number of clients. Then there is the impact of the cost of living crisis to consider.
- 2.36 The table below indicates the current rental charges of District and Boroughs in Surrey. It is not known what the other D&BS are recommending for 23/24 but increases are expected.

District and Borough	Weekly charge 2022/23
Woking	£4.94 or £4.20 if means tested benefit received
Spelthorne	£4.30
Waverley	£4.55
Surrey Heath	£4.90
Mole Valley	£4.60
Elmbridge	£3.92
Guildford	£4.60
Runnymede	£4.90

- 2.37 The Careline charge it also entitles the resident to the free falls response service, the only such service offered in Surrey.

Increase rental charges

- 2.38 The table below indicates the current Careline weekly rental charges and resulting income generated from different increase charge scenarios on current client numbers. Although Woking is the only district and borough in Surrey to have a reduced rental rate for those clients in receipt of means tested benefits it is not recommended to remove this lower rate all together. However, it is recommended to increase the lower rate by 50% of the difference between the lower and full rate after uplift.

	22/23 current charge pw	5% inc	10% inc	15% inc	20% inc
Full Rate 845 clients	£4.94	£5.19	£5.43	£5.68	£5.93
Additional income pw		£211.25	£414.05	£625.30	£836.55

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Total income with increase pa	£217,064	£228,048	£238,594	£247,382	£260,564
Lower Rate 242 clients	£4.20	£4.82	£5.05	£5.28	£5.51
Additional income pw		£150.04	£205.70	£261.36	£317.02
Total income with increase pa	£52,853	£60,655	£63,549	£66,444	£69,338

Careline Full Rate

- 2.39 It is recommended to increase the Careline full rate weekly rental cost by 20% an increase of £0.99p per week bringing the weekly charge to £5.93.

Careline Lower Rate

- 2.40 It is recommended to gradually remove the two tier charge over the next two financial years, so that from 2025/25 there will be one full rate only in line with all other Surrey D&Bs. The difference at assumed increase by 20% to £5.93 from £4.20 current lower rate is a 50% difference increase of 87p pw to £5.07 pw. This will affect 242 residents.
- 2.41 These increases are necessary to cover the increased cost in capital outlay of purchasing the equipment and increased staffing costs and overheads.

GSM/Digital Alarm

- 2.42 The number of clients that do not have a telephone landline is increasing. Also, with the digital switch underway and due to be completed by 2025, moving forward all community alarms will run from a SIM card within the alarm unit. There are annual costs for the SIM card in a digital alarm.
- 2.43 The current charge for a SIM card in a GSM unit is £1.65 per week it is proposed to keep this charge the same and introduce this for all new clients or clients being upgraded to a digital hub as part of the upgrade process.

OwnFone

- 2.44 OwnFones were introduced during the pandemic and were used for clients who were Covid positive. As there is no connection to phone lines, it could simply be handed to the client on the doorstep without the need of a member of staff entering the home. The option to change it to a standard alarm was offered at the end of the free trial period but a small number of clients decided to keep the OwnFone. Like the traditional alarm the OwnFone will work within home and garden and when activated will connect to the Monitoring Centre in the normal way. OwnFones are not compatible with any other telecare, including a linked smoke alarm and the client needs to have the capacity to charge it on a regular basis, similar to a mobile phone.
- 2.45 When introduced a separate charge was agreed at £4.95. The table below indicates the charges with 5%, 10% 15% or 20% increase.

	22/23 current charge pw	5% inc	10% inc	15% inc	20% inc
OwnFone	£4.95	£5.20	£5.45	£5.70	£5.94

- 2.46 The proposal is to increase the weekly charge by 20%. There are 4 clients at present renting the OwnFone. The OwnFone does not allow for additional telecare peripherals to be added.

However, it gives clients choice over their finances by offering a basic alarm that can be used to summon help if required.

Smoke Alarms

- 2.47 For some time it has been policy to provide a Careline linked smoke alarm free of charge when you become a Careline client. This is good practice and recommended by the Fire and Rescue Service. The cost of a linked smoke alarm is £42.43 and is fitted by our Handyperson service. It is proposed to continue with this service free of charge to our clients because a free offer will encourage all clients to have a smoke alarm fitted, to minimise fire risk.
- 2.48 Summary New Recommended Charges

Type	Cost per week
Alarm – Full Rate (20% Increase)	£5.93
Alarm – Lower Rate – 50% difference	£5.07
OwnFone (20% Increase)	£5.94

Brockhill Extra Care - Julie Mémé

- 2.49 Brockhill has a guest room available for relatives/friends of tenants to rent when they visit Brockhill tenants. It is recommended that this charge is increased from £40 per night to £50.00 per night. Most visitors stay in the guest flat for one night only in order to visit a relative when they live far away. If they choose to stay in a hotel in Woking the charge would be considerably higher.
- 2.50 The hair saloon can be hired by an external hairdresser to benefit the tenants of Brockhill and visitors to the day centre to whom they charge for the haircuts etc. It is proposed to increase the hire charge for the hair dressing saloon, as customers have increased, from £45 to £50 per day or £25 to £30 per half day. The actual charges for the haircut, wash, perm etc is determined by the hairdresser providing the service but it is considerably cheaper than a High Street hairdressers.
- 2.51 It is recommended that a new charge be introduced at £15 per hour to hire rooms as one offs exclusively for parties, wakes etc.

Hale End Court Extra Care - Julie Mémé

- 2.52 Hale End Court extra care scheme's fees for renting the hairdressing saloon will follow the same pricing pattern as Brockhill i.e. £45.00 per day or £30 per half day.
- 2.53 There is no guest facility at Hale End Court however the dining room can also be hired exclusively for parties and wakes at the recommended £15.00 ph.

Homelink - Julie Mémé

- 2.54 Homelink is part of the NW Surrey Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Hub with Spelthorne, Runnymede and Surrey Heath 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.
- 2.55 The NW Surrey Hub has agreed to maintain the management fee to carry out major disabled adaptations at 15% of the adaptation cost of the works. Any increase reduces the amount available to spend on the actual disabled adaptations.

Handyperson Service - Julie Mémé

- 2.56 Homelink now operates the Handyperson service for the four boroughs. 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.
- 2.57 Most 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 work is increasing due to the aging population, the effect of the pandemic and our growing ties with Adult Social Care, Health and through the Alliance Integrated Care Partnership. The Handyperson Service is part funded by the Better Care Fund and the grant for 22/23 remained the same as the previous year. Funding for following years has not been confirmed.

DIY Handyperson Service

- 2.58 As most time available is dedicated to health and safety work, especially to assist hospital discharge, the actual time available for chargeable DIY work is diminishing. There is still a growing need for such a paid for DIY service where a resident wants a simple job like putting up shelves, curtain poles etc which are often too small a job for private contractors to be interested and they have no family/friends to help. There is also trust in our service which is why our clients are willing to wait for us to complete jobs as these DIY jobs are not our priority.
- 2.59 The proposed increase in DIY Handyperson charges is recommended to increase the ability of the service to become self-financing in the long term, cover the increased cost of fuel and material and provide resilience in the current uncertain price climate, whilst at the same time ensuring that the service is accessible for older, disabled or vulnerable residents.
- 2.60 The proposed hourly charges for our traditional Homelink customers (elderly, disabled or vulnerable) are for labour, unlike a private contractor we do not charge a separate call out fee. The cost of any materials purchased is also charged to the customer.

	DIY hourly charge including VAT 22/23	DIY hourly charge including VAT 23/24
Routine DIY	£35	£45
Minor Electrical Work	£50	£60
Minor Plumbing Work	£40	£50
Assisting voluntary organisations	£45	£55

- 2.61 Consideration is being given to the introduction of a dedicated chargeable DIY Handyperson service in order to maximise income with the demand and have the ability to offer the service to our private rented landlords we work with who also struggle to find contractors willing to carry out small repair jobs. This would encourage landlords to have small essential works carried out and provide access to a workman without the need to search for a contractor. This would be charged at a more commercial rate to cover all costs. It is anticipated that should this scheme proceed the charge should be a minimum of £97 per hour (plus VAT) in order to provide an income stream for the council rather than purely covering costs. No call out fee would be charged. This model may be trialled in 2023.

Independent Support Services - Julie Mémé

- 2.62 The Independent Support team provide support to our most vulnerable Council tenants in nine sheltered schemes, some de-designated schemes and some single community properties where elderly, vulnerable tenants are living in general needs properties. The tenants either pay for weekly or monthly support depending on their needs and this is charged in addition to the rent. This charge is mandatory for all new tenants but when the charges were introduced

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in 2020 some tenants received protection from the new charges but had no guarantee how long the protection would last.

- 2.63 It is proposed that the support charge is replaced with a new charge called Tenancy Sustainment Charge. This charge will be Housing benefit eligible where applicable.
- 2.64 The new Tenancy Sustainment Charge has been calculated purely on the actual salaries plus on cost of the team charged across the number of tenants receiving the service and the frequency of the visits carried out.
- 2.65 The current weekly charge for a monthly visit in the community or de-designated scheme is £4.00 pw and this is recommended to increase to £5.59 pw. The current weekly charge for a sheltered scheme weekly visit is £11.80 and this is recommended to increase to £15.59.
- 2.66 Discussions are underway with Housing Benefit and Finance Teams to confirm that these charges and the duties carried out by the team can be claimed for by Housing Benefit. This means that any tenant receiving Housing Benefit will not actually pay the support charge but the HRA will receive the payment from Housing Benefit. This could result in an potential £187,000 payment into the Housing Revenue Account.
- 2.67 Of the tenants receiving support from the team there are currently 91 tenants not receiving Housing Benefit and of them 67 are already paying £11.80 pw.
- 2.68 The Independent Support Service Pop In Service was introduced as an additional service for our most vulnerable, elderly and disabled residents of the Borough based on the resident's individual needs and not where they live. This service is tenure neutral.
- 2.69 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 short periods i.e. hospital discharge, illness or bereavement or when family/carers go on holiday. It provides an hour visit by an Independent Support Officer but does not include any personal care, cleaning or gardening.
- 2.70 The current charge is £18.00 per hour and it is intended to increase this to £25.00 per hour.

Centres for the Community – Adam Thomas

- 2.71 The Centres for the Community are forecast a reduction in income from fees and charges. This is due to the increase in rental income through lease arrangements and therefore the overall income is not reduced. Leasing parts of the Centres enables the Council to sustain regular income and it enables local charitable groups and community interest companies to access affordable space to deliver their services.
- 2.72 A day-care service continues to be popular at St. Mary's in Byfleet and The Vyne in Knaphill and this offer is being expanded to include the supported living sites Brockhill in Goldsworth Park and Hale End Court in Old Woking. Currently, day-guests pay separately for their transport to the Centres and their hot meal. We would like to move to a day-care package arrangement whereby a customer, their family or carer, can pay an inclusive day fee which would include their transport, meal and activities. The exact cost for this is not confirmed due to ongoing discussions with the transport provider and their projected costs for 2023/24. However, the cost would be no more than £20 per person per day. This continues to provide a highly affordable support offer for elderly day-guests and will simplify the booking arrangements making the service more accessible. It is proposed that the Strategic Director for Communities in agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing have the delegated authority to approve this request once the detail has been confirmed.

3.0 Place

Building Control Fees (David Edwards, Chief Building Control Surveyor)

- 3.1 Building Control operates in a financially competitive environment; the fees we are allowed to charge are covered by The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 which require us to balance income against expenditure. Due to the major schemes carried out in Woking over the past 6 years the fees have remained unchanged to prevent a surplus accruing. Now, to bring us into line with adjoining boroughs, it is proposed to raise the fees by 10% across the board for 2023/24 and again for 2024/25. However it should be noted that Building Control day to day finances are very much affected by major projects.

Car Park Charges (Mark Tabner)

- 3.2 Car parking income represents a significant income source to the Council and as such has a substantial contribution to make to the Council's longer-term financial sustainability and helping to set and maintain a balanced budget. An effective approach to parking including fee setting is essential to ensure a vibrant mixed use town centre offering retail, public service, leisure, cultural, business and residential facilities that work for local residents and attract visitors and businesses.
- 3.3 The proposed changes set out below are in line with the Council's current Medium Term Plan and the Council Strategy and seeks a balance between factors including economic activity, financial sustainability and the Climate Emergency that the Council had declared.
- 3.4 Activity in the town centre car parks remains around 35% less than pre-pandemic levels. As part of the fees and charges review the forecast activity levels have been reduced by 35% against each tariff. The main points/changes include;
- Retaining the £3 for up to 3 hours on Saturday in Victoria Place Car Park
 - Extending £3 for up to 3 hours on Sundays in all town centre car parks (previously £3 for up to 2 hours)
 - Increasing the charge for up to 1 hour from £1.60 to £1.80.
 - Increasing the overnight charge from £1.50 to £2.20.
 - Increasing the seven-to-24-hour charge from £13 to £15.
- 3.5 The tariffs for out-of-town car parks are increased and the period of free parking at Woking Park is reduced from three hours to two hours.

- 3.6 The £0.70 increase is estimated to generate an additional £385K. Whilst this is a proportionally high increase to the overnight tariff the Council's new car park management system includes functionality which enables retailers, including night-time venues such as the theatre and cinema to offer discounted parking to their customers as part of a promotion. This functionality is being developed into a trial for 2023.

Parking Trial

- 3.7 The tariff trial for Victoria Place car park is based on £3 for up to three hours parking on Saturdays. This means anyone staying for up to one hour will continue to pay £1.60 but anyone staying between 61 minutes to three hours will pay £3 in total. The trial commenced on 3 September, once the 21-day statutory traffic regulation order ended.

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- 3.8 The trial seeks to offer cheaper parking and encourage car park users to extend their stay. To measure the effectiveness of the trial, data from 9 April to 27 August was used to establish a pre-trial baseline. This is compared to the data captured during the first ten Saturdays of the trial (latest data available), from 3 September until 5 November. For the purposes of the analysis the night-time charges have been excluded as these cross over from the previous day or into the next day.
- 3.9 During the trial the average number of transactions for stays of up to 2 hours increased by 5% (189) and for three hours increased by 4% (134).
- 3.10 The total number of transactions pre-trial was 2,867. The number of transactions has been above the baseline for each of the last seven weeks of the trial, which indicates a positive direction of travel and amounts to an additional 2,127 transactions. Visitor numbers at the other town centre car parks have remained static, suggesting customers are not moving from those car parks into Victoria Place.
- 3.11 Visitors are staying longer. Anecdotally, Woking businesses have provided a positive response to the car parking pilot. Retailers, restaurants and leisure operators in or near Victoria Place have seen a rise in footfall and turnover and have attributed this to the lower parking charge. As one retailer commented “last Saturday we had a peak in our trading trend and we saw town was buzzing throughout day, which compared to my other branches, Woking did almost 50% more trade than my other stores and that could be partially as result of reduced parking fee.”
- 3.12 The £3 for up to 3 hours is included in the proposed Fees and Charges schedule. A statutory traffic regulation order will need to be published in the local press for 21 days before any changes apply.
- 3.13 The proposed tariffs are estimated to generate an extra £500K. This includes the £400K already included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy plus a further £100K.

Car Park Season Ticket Charges (Mark Tabner)

CO₂ Permits

- 3.14 The CO₂ permit structure was introduced in 2008, incentivising lower emission vehicles by linking the price of a permit to the CO₂ rating of a vehicle. For example, vehicles with a CO₂ rating between 121 to 150g/km would pay £1,920 for a Band C permit. Vehicles with lower emission vehicles would qualify for a discounted A or B permit, whilst vehicles with higher emissions would pay increasingly more for Band D to G permits.
- 3.15 Whilst the permit prices have changed over the years, the upper and lower CO₂ limits for the seven bands have not changed since its introduction. The ban on new petrol and diesel cars, was brought forward by the government to 2030 and by 2035, all new cars and vans will have to have zero emissions at the tail pipe. To keep CO₂ permits in-step with the increasing availability and ownership of ULEV's it is proposed that a combination of adjustments are made to the pricing structure. These adjustments include;
- Adjusting the upper and lower CO₂ limits for each band to continue to incentivise the lowest emission vehicles.
 - Adjusting the percentage discount for Bands A and B and the percentage surcharge for Bands D to G.
 - Adjusting the price of a Band C permit (Band C is the baseline price from which discounts for Bands A, B and surcharges for Bands D to G are calculated).
- 3.16 We currently offer seven permit bands, each with a lower and upper CO₂ ratings as shown in the table below.

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Permit Band	CO ₂ rating	% Discount or Surcharge	Price to Customer
A	0 - 100	-50%	£960
B	101 - 120	-25%	£1,450
C	121 - 150	0%	£1,920
D	151 - 165	+10%	£2,120
E	166 - 185	+15%	£2,220
F	186 - 225	+20%	£2,320
G	226+	+25%	£2,400

3.17 It is proposed a combination of adjustments are made over the next three years. As shown in the table below, for 2023/24 the price of a Band C permit is increased by £280, from £1,920 to £2,200. The discounts for Band A and B permits are adjusted from -50% to -40% and from -25% to 20% respectively.

2023/24			
Permit Band	CO ₂ rating	% Discount or Surcharge	Price to Customer
A	0 - 100	-40%	£1,320
B	101 - 120	-20%	£1,760
C	121 - 150	0%	£2,200
D	151 - 165	+10%	£2,420
E	166 - 185	+15%	£2,530
F	186 - 225	+20%	£2,640
G	226+	+25%	£2,750

3.18 For 2024/25 it is proposed the discounts for Band A and B permits are adjusted to -25% and -10% respectively. The upper and lower CO₂ limits are adjusted for Bands C to G and the surcharge for Bands D to G are each increased by 5%.

2024/25			
Permit Band	CO ₂ rating	% Discount or Surcharge	Price to Customer
A	0 - 100	-25%	£1,650
B	101 - 120	-10%	£1,980
C	121 - 135	0%	£2,200
D	136 - 150	+15%	£2,530
E	151 - 165	+20%	£2,640
F	166 - 180	+25%	£2,750
G	181+	+30%	£2,860

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- 3.19 For 2025/26 the discount for a Band A permit is adjusted to -20% and the surcharge for a Band G permit is increased by 5%. The upper and lower CO₂ limits are adjusted for all Bands.

2025/26			
Permit Band	CO ₂ rating	% Discount or Surcharge	Price to Customer
A	0 - 49	-20%	£1,760
B	50 - 100	-10%	£1,980
C	101 - 120	0%	£2,200
D	121 - 130	+15%	£2,530
E	131 - 140	+20%	£2,640
F	141 - 165	+25%	£2,750
G	166+	+35%	£2,970

- 3.20 These changes are estimated to generate an additional £59,523 (ex VAT) in 2023/24, an additional £42,128 in 2024/25 and a further £41,824 in 2025/26.

	Income (Ex VAT)	Increase revenue from 2022/23 (Ex VAT)
2022/23	£298,371	/
2023/24	£357,894	£59,523
2024/25	£400,022	£101,651
2025/26	£441,846	£143,475

The cost impact on CO₂ permit users is smoothed more evenly across a three-year period. The annual impact on users is between £110 and £360 (inc VAT). Changing the upper and lower CO₂ limits of the permit bands realigns the pricing structure to the increasing shift towards ULEV's and the government's zero emission target.

Resident 24 Hour Permit

- 3.21 Residents living in Woking town centre Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) area 1 can apply for a residents' 24-hour discounted car park permit. It allows unrestricted use of either the Victoria Place, Victoria Way or Heathside Crescent car parks. It is proposed the price of this permit is increased from £780 to £860. This would generate an additional £11K p.a.

EV Charging (David Loveless)

- 3.22 There is currently no payment system for the Council's EV charging points within the Town Centre car parks, so users can currently charge their vehicles for free. Council officers are currently considering a number of suppliers to install and operate a payment and usage monitoring system and to maintain the EV chargers. This proposal to install a payment system has already been approved by the Executive in its November 2021 meeting.
- 3.23 The EV chargers create an ongoing cost to the Council in terms electricity usage and maintenance costs, and this cost will likely rise further if the expected increase in electric vehicle ownership takes place. This long-term cost can be off-set via a payment system. The back-office telemetry to be installed will also allow for monitoring of EV charger usage, and for active monitoring of the chargers' performance in order proactively maintain them.

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- 3.24 A rate per Kilowatt hour to charge the end users has not yet been finalised, and discussions are ongoing with the energy provider Thameswey and with potential EV charging operators over the most suitable rate to charge. It is proposed that delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to agree charging fees. The intention is to have the payment system fully operational by March 2023 at the latest, but a sooner date is being aimed for.
- 3.25 The public will be notified very soon about the intention to put in a payment system, via a marketing campaign, then the pricing levels will be communicated to the public at a later date, nearer to the time that the chargers become operational.

Garden Waste Collection Subscription Charges (Mark Tabner)

- 3.26 The garden waste collection service resumed in April 2022, following a period of reduced service caused by the HGV driver shortage. Subscribers have been provided with a six-month extension before being asked to renew. The current subscription fee has remained unchanged for over five years at £45 for the 1st bin, £30 for additional bins and concessionary rates at 50%. For 2023/24 it is recommended that all subscribers are charged the same flat rate of £50 per bin. This removes the discounted additional bin charge and concessionary discount. A key rationale for charging for providing a garden waste service is that not all residents require the service. Those producing garden waste can opt to subscribe, take material to the Community Recycling Centre (FOC) or home compost, which is the most environmentally friendly way of dealing with garden waste. Based on existing subscription numbers, this is estimated to generate an additional £155K p.a.

Bulky Waste Collection Charges (Mark Tabner)

- 3.27 The charges are based on a rate for the first item (cost of arriving at the property to make the initial collection) and a lower rate for additional items, up to a maximum of 10 items. It is recommended that the price is increased from £30 to £35 for the 1st item and from £10 to £15 for each additional item, with concessionary rates retained at 50%. This price increase ensures the service continues to cover the contracted collection cost whilst remaining competitive with local commercial operators.

Street Naming and Numbering

- 3.28 Street naming and numbering is a statutory responsibility managed by Woking Borough Council. The management and administration of addressing in the borough prevents the duplication of names and numbers. The Borough Council works with Royal Mail, property owners, property developers and members of the authority to make sure suitable names are chosen for existing properties, new properties, and new streets. These are also circulated to other organisations including the Emergency Services.
- 3.29 The Council's maintenance of the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), which feeds daily into the National LPG, ensures emergency services can find properties quickly, post is delivered efficiently, delivery companies can provide a reliable service and service provider records are up to date and accurate.
- 3.30 The Council exceeds the statutorily expected minimum of providing solely a street / property naming service, by delivering additional discretionary street naming and numbering services. These include:
- Naming and numbering new properties, including conversions.
 - Making alterations to the name or numbering of new developments after the initial naming and numbering has been undertaken.
 - Notifying relevant third-party organisations of new official addresses.
 - Providing confirmation of new or altered official addresses.

- Resolving challenges to existing official naming/numbering schemes held within the LLPG.

3.31 These involve processes including:

- Checking of application forms.
- Confirming planning permission is in place, where required.
- Checking locational details are accurate.
- Consulting and liaising with external organisations such as Royal Mail (for approval of a postcode) and the Emergency Services.
- Liaison by email, letter, and telephone with the applicant throughout, including providing formal address confirmation letters / emails.
- Recording of confirmed information on the LLPG.

3.32 The Council has not previously applied fees for these additional services; the costs were instead provided for through the general fund, at a cost to council taxpayers generally. At a time of local rising service delivery costs and in the context of (growing) fees applied by most other local authorities in the county and nationally, it is appropriate for Woking Borough Council to introduce fees for Woking's street naming and numbering services where possible.

3.33 Fees are proposed to be implemented from April 2023. The purposes are to:

- Gather a fair income to cover the costs of providing the addressing service, whilst not making a profit (in accordance with relevant legislation).
- The fees will also contribute towards key corporate and service objectives concerning financial control and the 2022 / 23 priority commitment to consider new approaches to increase income.

3.34 The proposed initial fees are as set out in the accompanying schedule.

3.35 The above fees have been developed having regard to the Council's Strategy for setting Fees and Charges, the full direct and wider costs of the service, the typical range of service users, the average number of applications received each year, and in light of benchmarking with the equivalent fees of other local authorities.

3.36 The proposed fees sit midway within the range of fees charged by other authorities. They also recognise that service users are obliged to address properties through the relevant local authority for the location, and hence this is a non-competitive fee charging environment.

3.37 Street naming and numbering fees are not VAT liable.

3.38 These proposed fees are still subject to:

- Risk analysis and an equalities impact assessment
- Consultation with the Greener Woking and Planning and Regulation Portfolio Holders, and the Strategic Director for Place.

(Any updates to the proposed fee schedule will be reported verbally at the meeting).

3.39 Based on the services provided in 2020 and 2021, as a conservative estimate the proposed fees would contribute an average £20,000 per annum income towards service delivery costs. This is considered an appropriate level at which to pitch this first charging regime for Woking's street naming and numbering services. There is potential to increase these fees in future years if receipts insufficiently cover the costs of service provision.

3.40 It is recommended that these fees are increased each year in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) to ensure they take account of inflationary impacts on service costs.

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- 3.41 Following commencement of fee charging, the street naming and numbering application numbers and process will be monitored, to ensure continued high quality and effective service operation and to gauge real time income receipts and service costs. It should be noted that applications numbers received do already vary annually according to variations in the amount and pace of new developments coming forward.
- 3.42 Should any immediate concerns be identified, the opportunity can be taken during the year to review the fees and, if appropriate, to alter the pricing structure in accordance with changing circumstances: for example, any legislation changes, altered patterns of service use, further benchmarking and other variable costs. Any in-year review will be carried out in consultation with Financial Services, the relevant Portfolio holders, and the Leader of the Council.
- 3.43 Whilst formal consultation with users is not proposed, from 1 January 2023, officers will begin to communicate to current service users through the website and in correspondence the intention to begin charging fees from April. The fee schedule will be published online from early March 2023 and explanatory information and an electronic payment method will be provided. Feedback received in response to fee charging will be recorded and considered as part of the next review of fees and charges.
- 3.44 It is recommended that delegated authority be given to the Green Infrastructure Manager and Strategic Director for Place, in consultation with the Greener Woking and Planning and Regulation Portfolio Holders, to finalise the proposed street naming and numbering fees in light of Legal and other relevant advice before implementing these from 1 April 2023.

Stray Dog Service (Emma Bourne) Appendix 2

- 3.45 The Council will enter a new contract on 21st November 2022 for our stray dogs service. The basis of charges paid by the Council will be changing under the new contract and it is proposed to review the charges levied by the Council to dog owners after implementation of the new contract to determine whether changes are necessary to offset any increase in operational cost. It is recommended that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director for Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulation to revise charges for the stray dogs service following the commencement of the new service contract to be effective from 1 January 2023.

4.0 Corporate Resources

Local Land Charges (David Ripley) (Appendix 3)

- 4.1 The national Local Land Charges (LCC) Programme will make Her Majesty's Land Register (HMLR) the sole registering authority and official search provider for LLC in accordance with the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015. Woking Borough Council is currently going through the migration process to transfer the data from the current LLC registry to the national digital registry and the scheduled completion date is before the start of 2023/24. LLC searches & fee setting will therefore not be carried out by the Woking Borough Council from that date. These will be carried out via the national LLC portal on the GOV.UK website, apart from some non-Surrey CC Con29 questions. Surrey CC increase their fees each year, these will be updated once notification is received.
- 4.2 The current LLC search fees have been carried forward, as these will not be charged or set by the Council once the migration exercise has been completed. However, they have been removed from the cost/income calculation of the standard search fee to reflect the situation once migration has been completed. A reasonable increase has been applied to the remaining non Surrey CC Con29 questions which have not had an increase since 2018/19.

Taxis and Private Hire (Gareth John) (Appendix 3)

- 4.3 A modest increase in respect of the fees and charges schedule for taxi licensing is proposed following the approach taken for the past 2 years. The Licensing Department is running at deficit and until 2 years ago fees had not been increased for a number of years. Due to a continuing challenging trading environment it is proposed that the deficit be eliminated by gradual increases over the coming years rather than by a sudden sharp increase.

5.0 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 The setting of appropriate Fees and Charges aligns with the Corporate Plan priority for Effective Use of the Council's Resources, achieving best value for taxpayers and enabling the continued provision of services. Individual services, as outlined in the detail of this report, support the Council's key areas of service provision.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 6.1 The changes in fees and charges considered in this report are summarised in the following table.

	Budget 2022/23	Estimated Yield 2023/24	Change in Yield	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Communities	1,485,642	1,499,524	13,882	0.9%
Place	1,355,860	1,619,437	263,577	19.4%
Place - Car Parks	7,766,224	7,118,842	-647,382	-8.3%
Place - On Street Parking	672,100	-	-672,100	-100.0%
Corporate Resources	445,117	447,994	2,877	0.6%
Total	11,724,943	10,685,797	-1,039,146	-8.9%

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 There is a reduction in income forecast to be generated from the community centres in 2023/24 which is partly offset by new rental income of £46,670 not included in this report. This rent increases the Communities total change in income to 4%.
- 6.4 Car Park budgets were held at pre-Covid levels for 2022/23 with a provision of £1.3m assumed from reserves to reflect forecast activity levels reductions post pandemic. A further £1m risk was recognised in the July 2022 MTFs. The proposed changes to charges, and assumed activity levels, for 2023/24 result in forecast income below 2022/23 budgeted levels but represent a significant contribution towards recovery of income compared to 2022/23.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.5 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.

Legal

- 6.6 Local authorities have a variety of powers to charge for specific statutory services set out in statute. The Local Government Act 2003 also provides a power to trade and a power to charge

for discretionary service. The Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with a general power of competence that confers on them the power to charge for services.

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Freedom Leisure and the Leisure Partnership Board on 20th October 2022 on the 'core' and 'non-core' charges for the Leisure Management Contract.
- 7.2 The Goldsworth Park Angling Club has been consulted on the proposed charges for Fishing. No changes are proposed to the current fees.
- 7.3 Consultation has taken place with Ambassadors Theatre Group in respect of the proposed charges for the Rhoda McGaw Theatre.

REPORT ENDS