

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2020-21

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 2020/21 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.
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Date Published:	15 November 2019

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 2019/20 were approved by the Council on 6 December 2018 and the forecast yields were incorporated in the budget approved by the Council on 13 February 2019.
- 1.3 As was the case when the 2019/20 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 2020/21 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

Independent Services

Community Meals Service (Julie Mémé) (Appendix 1 Page 46)

- 2.1 The Community Meals Service is a vital service for many elderly and disabled residents of Woking and continues to grow its customer base by 10% pa.
- 2.2 The menu offer has extensively changed over the past 12 months and will continue to change to offer variety and flexibility. A frozen meal offer has been introduced charged at the same rate as the hot delivery. This provides more flexibility and enables residents to have a meal even when they have hospital appointments which currently causes a cancellation of meal service for that day as hot meals cannot be reheated.
- 2.3 Over the past 12 months there has been an increase in food prices generally. There are uncertainties regarding the impact of Brexit and potential further increases in prices. Our main suppliers have already warned about potential additional increases in prices throughout the next 12 months. Our charges remain competitive in relation to neighbouring local authorities and are still one of the lowest priced services in Surrey.
- 2.4 In spite of the cost pressures and uncertainties in running the meal services it is proposed that charges do not increase to maintain their affordability and increase take up. This will be the third year running of no increase in charges.
- 2.5 The tea time meal offer is relatively new but demand is increasing. The menu offer has been improved and made more flexible. The breakfast meal options have continued to grow in popularity especially with greater variety being offered. To increase take up and retain affordability it is not proposed to increase the charges.
- 2.6 Members at the Community Centres and Brockhill are provided with 2 course lunches as are local organisations like Surrey Choices. The charges will not be increased to stay consistent with the hot meals service.

Careline (Julie Mémé) (Appendix 1 Page 45)

- 2.7 Having undertaken a review of the private market and competitors, our charges remain higher but a more holistic service is provided benefiting the residents with access to all People services including the falls responder service. The number of private competitors e.g. Age UK, Saga, Boots are increasing annually. It is becoming evident that Woking residents are shopping around the market with greater use of internet searching. It is therefore proposed not to increase the charges for our clients in receipt of means tested benefits.

Brockhill (Julie Mémé) Appendix 1 Page 47)

- 2.8 Brockhill Extra Care Scheme offers hairdressing and chiropodist facilities for its residents and visitors. Local business hire the rooms to operate these services. It is recommended that these charges are not increased. The services are extremely valuable to the residents and local businesses may find that the increased charges make it no longer profitable to run the services.
- 2.9 Brockhill has a guest room available for relatives to use when they visit tenants. This is a popular, well used facility but the charge has not increased for several years. The proposed increase still makes the guest room affordable in comparison to booking a local hotel. After each use of the room it has to be cleaned and bedding changed and laundered which incurs cost.

Homelink (Julie Mémé) (Appendix 1 Page 44)

- 2.10 Homelink is part of the NW Surrey Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Hub with Spelthorne and Runnymede BC. Woking takes the leading role designed to provide a more consistent approach across the area and to provide efficiencies and savings in service provision.
- 2.11 Homelink now operates the handyperson service for all three boroughs and will soon be extending to Surrey Heath. The proposed handyperson charges will apply across the hub. Any income generated will benefit Woking and be ploughed back in to the Handyperson Service.
- 2.12 Increasingly the work of the handyperson service is to assist hospital discharge and enable residents to remain safely and securely in their homes as long as possible for which there is no hourly charge. This work is partly funded by a capital grant and an HIA revenue grant which has not yet been confirmed for 2020/21. As this work increases with an aging population and especially with our stronger ties with Adult Social Care, NHS and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) through the Integrated Care Partnership, the actual time available for the paid DIY service has reduced.
- 2.13 The handyperson service is part funded by the Better Care Fund. The level of handyperson grant was protected in 2019/20 as part of the new Home from Hospital service called Homesafe Plus. Funding for 2020/21 is not known. The proposed increase in handyperson charges are recommended to increase the ability of the service to become self-financing in the long term.
- 2.14 The NW Surrey HIA Hub has agreed to maintain the management fee to carry out major disabled adaptations at 15% of the adaptation cost. Any increase would reduce the actual grant available to spend on the adaptations.

Housing Standards and Licensing (Shaun Moss) (Appendix 1 Page 41)

- 2.15 The licence fees for Houses in Multiple Occupancy has not been increased since 2017 and a licence can take considerable officers time, including inspecting the property, writing a

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report and then issuing of the licences. This charge has been increased to reflect the higher costs over the past few years.

- 2.16 As reported in the Green Book, the introduction of the Selective Licensing Scheme has improved the overall standard of property conditions and has had a positive impact to the designated area. Prior to the commencement of the Selective Licensing Scheme, a 33% non-compliance rate (based on 597 applications) was assumed when setting the Licence Fee and Financial Penalty income budgets under the Scheme. At the end of the previous financial year (31 March 2019) the Council had received 782 applications of which only 102 were received after the amnesty period. The higher than anticipated response from landlords resulted in a 13% non-compliance rate which has had a financial impact as there is less scope for income to be generated from licence fees (these are only charged to landlords applying after the deadline) and minimal financial penalties on landlords. As reported in the Green Book, the shortfall in income in the current year is offset by savings on staff costs and these lower costs form the basis of the 2020/21 Selective Licensing staffing budget.
- 2.17 The Enforcement and Selective Licence fees have not been increased. However, a review will be undertaken in during the coming year.
- 2.18 Housing Standards have created further fees to reflect the on-going officer's work and services that we provide to Woking residents.

Independent Support Service (Julie Mémé) (Appendix 1 Page 43)

- 2.19 The Independent Support Service has been 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.
- 2.20 The new service will 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 will be 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.
- 2.21 The charges above have been informed by the cost (i.e. staffing and on costs) for delivering a visit and are inclusive of VAT. These have then been adjusted to consider frequency of visits (i.e. weekly service cheaper than monthly service, regular service cheaper than one-offs), affordability and uplift from existing charges.
- 2.22 All customers on means-tested benefits will receive the support service free of charge recognising those most in need are able to have the support they require.
- 2.23 Pop in visits are a one off visit for one hour max (no personnel care, cleaning, gardening etc.) aimed to help with peace of mind when carers/relatives are on holiday, deal with utilities, prescriptions etc. Clients requesting Pop In visits are expected to be those who currently do not have the need for any of our services on a regular basis.
- 2.24 The General Fund will need to subsidise the shortfall in income from private clients from 2020/21. Take up is unknown but is expected to slowly build. Based on 75 new private clients (assuming 45% pay), the service is estimated to receive an income of £17,927 against a cost of £44,902 (i.e. requiring subsidy of £26,975 from the General Fund). Forecasting level of service is difficult, so the proposal is that a cap is applied and a waiting list held. If demand is sufficient to require additional staffing the Council can consider this when appropriate.

Centres for the Community (Adam Thomas) (Appendix 1 Page 28)

- 2.25 There is no proposal to increase the hire costs of the rooms at St. Marys, Moorcroft, The Vyne, Parkview or Lakeview. The Centre Managers recently completed a benchmarking exercise and the fees are deemed to be reasonable and in line with other local providers. As the Centres are improved over the next year, the hires and overall usage is forecast to increase. This needs to be achieved first before the fees are altered.
- 2.26 The bathing service has been increased from £8 to £12 for an assisted bath and £6 to £10 for an unassisted bath. This is following a consultation with customers and a review of the costs of running the service across three Centres. The review and charges were approved by the Health and Wellbeing Task Group. The service has now been centralised to St. Mary's Centre in Byfleet. This enables contracted staff to run back to back sessions in one place which is more efficient and customers are using the facility regularly.

Art Development (Rose Blackley) (Appendix 4 Page 101)

- 2.27 Under the existing partnership agreement with the Ambassadors Theatre Group (ATG), it currently manages and operates the Rhoda McGaw Theatre on the Council's behalf, with all operating costs met by it and respective income generated from hires of the Theatre remaining with ATG. The current agreement does however provide for the Council to retain the control over the setting of hire rates for the Rhoda McGaw Theatre in consultation with the ATG and Woking Drama Association (WDA).
- 2.28 Due to bookings for the Theatre being taken up to two years in advance, hire rates up to and including 31 August 2022 are attached for approval.

Woking Interpreting and Translation Services (WITS)(Amanda Jeffrey) (Appendix 1 Page 40)

- 2.29 There are no changes to the WITS fees, however, the budget will be adjusted in line with yield which is lower than expected.

Leisure Management Contract (David Loveless) (Appendix 1 Page 3)

- 2.30 Freedom Leisure and the Leisure Partnership Board have reviewed the 'core' and 'non-core' charges for the Leisure Management Contract.

3.0 Place

Supplementary Planning Fees (Thomas James) (Appendix 2 Page 53)

- 3.1 In line with the Council's Strategy for applying and setting Fees and Charges for services, a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken with other Surrey authorities. It was identified that the charges currently levied are at or towards the lower end of the range of fees charged. It is proposed to increase the charges so they are in the middle of the range of fees. This would enable the Council to recover more of the cost involved in providing the pre-application advice service. It is proposed to re-band the charges to more accurately reflect the cost in providing the advice with a bespoke fee for the larger more complex schemes so a bespoke service can be provided.

Waste and Recycling and Garden Waste (Geoff McManus) (Appendix 2: Page 58)

- 3.2 There are no proposals to increase the charges during 2020/21.

Car Parks (Geoff McManus) (Appendix 2: Page 83)

- 3.3 Following off street tariff increases in October 2019 and pending the introduction of new car park management systems during 2020 no further increases are proposed during 2020/21.

Controlled Parking Zones (Geoff McManus) (Appendix 2: Page 90)

- 3.4 There are no charging proposals for 2020/2021. Any new proposals would normally originate from Woking Joint Committee and Surrey County Council acting as the highway authority for Woking.

Animal Licensing (Geoff McManus) (Appendix 2: Page 68)

- 3.5 The various fees for animal welfare licence activities have increased significantly this year. The new licensing regime was introduced in October 2018 based on estimated activities and time spent on those activities, which constituted the fee structure. Having now carried out the first year of inspections and issuing of the licences it has been found that the time required to carry out the necessary administration and inspection visits was considerably underestimated. Fees are determined on a cost recovery basis only and now more accurately reflect the officer time spent on this service.

Green Infrastructure Policy Documents (Tracey Haskins) (Appendix 2: Page 56)

- 3.6 The Single Use Plastics Policy (going online soon) and Street Naming and Numbering policy were adopted by Council on 25 July 2019. A charge for hard copy documents of £5 Single Use Plastics Policy and £20 for Street Naming and Numbering is proposed. Soft copies will be available to download free of charge from the Council's website.

Fishing Permits (Tracey Haskins) (Appendix 2: Page 65)

- 3.7 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 2020/21 and arrangements continue to work well.

4.0 Us

Local Land Charges (David Ripley) (Appendix 3: Page 97)

- 4.1 There is no proposal to increase the Woking BC element of Local Land Charge fees Over a 3 year cycle the fees received and costs incurred should be neutral, and increasing fees could result in this not being achieved. To date there is no indication that the fees levied by Surrey County Council are being increased, however if this happens it will be reflected in the fees published on the Council's website for Local Land Charge searches.
- 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 the statutory provisions) is £175.00

Taxis and Private Car Hire (Joanne McIntosh) (Appendix 3: Page 98)

- 4.3 There is no proposal to change the Woking BC Taxis and Private Hire vehicles fees for 2020/21, however activity levels fluctuate due to the cycle of 3 year driver licence renewals resulting in a reduction in estimated yield.

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- 4.4 The Taxis and Private Hire vehicles fees have not been reviewed for a number of years due to the disruption caused by the Town Centre works. This is not sustainable and a thorough review will be undertaken during the next municipal year.

5.0 Implications

Financial

- 5.1 The changes in fees and charges considered in this report are summarised in the following table:

	Budget 2019/20 £'000	Estimated Yield 2020/21 £'000	Change in Yield £'000	Change in Yield %
People	£1,039,758	£970,242	−£69,516	−6.7%
Place	£9,939,524	£10,217,513	£277,989	2.8%
Us	£502,507	£382,974	−£119,533	−23.8%
Total	£11,481,789	£11,570,729	£88,940	0.8%

- 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.

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 2020/21 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 Woking Community Transport on the proposed rates and implementation date.
- 6.2 Consultation has been undertaken with Freedom Leisure and the Leisure Partnership Board on the 'core' and 'non-core' charges for the Leisure Management Contract.
- 6.3 The Goldsworth Park Angling Club has been consulted on the proposed charges for Fishing.
- 6.4 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