

4 December 2018

Community, Health and Housing Committee

Fees and Charges – 2019/20

Report of: *Phoebe Barnes, Interim Financial Controller*

Wards Affected: *All Brentwood Borough Wards*

This report is: *Public report*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Fees and charges made by the Council for various services are reviewed on an annual basis by the relevant Committees relating to the services provided.
- 1.2. Recommended amendments to the fees and charges are incorporated into the budget setting process to take effect from the following financial year.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members agree to the proposed fees & charges for 2019/20 as attached in Appendix A-H subject to the budget setting process.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1. The Council has a number of fees and charges relating to the services it provides. As part of the budget setting process, these charges are reviewed on an annual basis. Whilst some of the fees and charges are statutory, and therefore determined through legislation, the Council must also review its charges for discretionary services to ensure that they reflect the current costs of service provision.
- 3.2. The individual charges that are being proposed are set out in Appendix A, B and C of this report.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1. The propose fees are based on a calculation of the costs involved in administering the various areas of work, apart from where there is a statutory charge or where the fees are set by Government.

- 4.2. The Council where possible will adopt a full cost recovery of fees and charges.
- 4.3. This year, the Council has undertaken a benchmarking exercise of all Fees & Charges. Fees & Charges where possible, have been compared against other Local Authorities within Essex as well as Local Businesses, if similar charges apply.

- 4.4. Below is a summary of each appendix regarding Fees & Charges proposals for 2019/20.

4.5. **Community Events**

These charges are full cost recovery. The current charges were benchmarked against other similar events in the vicinity, therefore charges have been rounded to the nearest £5 to make processing of payments easier for events.

Community Alarms

- 4.6. Currently, the service is undergoing a review exercise that has not yet been finalised. This exercise is to inform the charges going forward from 1st April 2019 and is due to be complete by the end of December 2018.
- 4.7. Proposed charges will be reported to Policy, Projects and Resources on 5th February 2019, so that the new fees & charges can be included in the proposed budget. The Chair and vice-chair of Community, Health & Housing will be consulted on the proposed fees before they are taken to Policy, Projects & Resources.

Homelessness

- 4.8. Costs have been reflected to ensure costs incurred by the Council are reflected in the recharges to tenants.

HRA Estates

- 4.9. Charges are to remain the same as they cover the costs incurred. However, storage for evictions is to increase by 1% inline with the proposal of increasing garage rents by 1%

HRA Repairs

- 4.10. Rechargeable Repairs charges reflect the cost the Council incurs from contractors.

- 4.11. Other repairs deemed re-chargeable reflects the charging Environment and Housing Committee approved on 23rd September 2015. The purpose of this pricing mechanism was to reduce the amount the Council is subsidising and encouraging tenants to be more aware and responsible for their property.

HRA Leaseholders

- 4.12. Fees and Charges have been altered to reflect the costs incurred by the Council to ensure there is full cost recovery.

Housing Standards

- 4.13. These charges are charges for full cost recovery, there is no proposed change as the current charge recovers the full cost of administering.

Golf Course

- 4.14. The benchmarking exercised carried out, established that Hartswood Golf Course is well placed in the middle of the target market area.
- 4.15. Based on the benchmarking exercise, proposals are to increase membership by 3%, this is to reflect the increase in costs to maintain the course.
- 4.16. A new membership is to be introduced to target the Under 25 golfers by introducing this new charge of £550 for a 7-day Annual season ticket, the Council hopes to target a greater market share, with the introduction of this fee.
- 4.17. It is proposed to remove 20 Round Ticket from 2019, this is to encourage membership by purchasing season tickets.
- 4.18. Green Fees are to be held at current price so that the course remains competitive with surrounding courses.

Open Spaces

- 4.19. Proposal that all the current Fees & Charges are increased by 3%, This is to reflect the increase in costs to maintain and provide services for Open Spaces in the Borough.
- 4.20. This increase has been benchmarked against other authorities. This increase is considered to be appropriate as it reflects the cost of the service provided, as well as ensuring the fees are not unaffordable.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 Officers review the fees and charges annually and this will be used to inform the 2019/20 budget setting process.

6. References to Council Priorities

- 6.1 To ensure the provision of efficient and effective services to our residents and businesses.

7. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 7.1 All costs associated with providing chargeable services have been reviewed in order to ensure, fees & charges are fully cost recoverable.
- 7.2 The benchmarking exercise ensures fees & charges are competitive and affordable.
- 7.3 The fees referred to in this report will inform the 2019/20 budget setting process.

Legal Implications

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- 7.4 The recommendations set out within this report are lawful and within the Council's powers and duties. There is an existing legal framework for charging for discretionary services including s93 Local Government Act 2003 and s1 Localism Act 2011 ('the general power of competence'). Where the fee is not prescribed by statute, the Council can set its own charges. As a general rule, those charges should not exceed the cost of providing the service.
- 7.5 Decision makers must have due regard to the Council's statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between applicants. This includes where the Council sets fees and charges.

8. Appendices

- Appendix A - Proposed fees and charges – Community Events
- Appendix B - Proposed fees and charges – Homelessness
- Appendix C - Proposed fees and charges - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Estates

- Appendix D - Proposed fees and charges – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rechargeable Repairs
- Appendix E - Proposed fees and charges – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Leaseholders
- Appendix F - Proposed fees and charges – Housing Standards
- Appendix G - Proposed fees and charges – Golf Course
- Appendix H - Proposed fees and charges – Open Spaces

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