

SUBJECT:	FEES AND CHARGES
DIRECTORATE:	COMMUNITIES & ENVIRONMENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHORS:	JACLYN GIBSON, CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER KIERON MANNING, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PLANNING SIMON COLBURN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report for information the amendment to fees and charges, which were applied with effect from 1st December 2022, in respect of:
- Car Parking
 - Crematorium
 - Christmas Market

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council approved a balanced budget for 2022/23 in March 2022, but much has changed since that point. Spiralling inflation, soaring energy prices and nationally agreed pay agreements are set to add significant cost pressures to the Council's budgets. These are in the main part caused by national issues, beyond the Council's control, and are impacting all Councils. In addition, the current cost of living crisis has the potential to increase demand for the Council's services by those who rely on the safety net provided by local government. These unforeseen and unavoidable pressures have seriously impacted the assumptions that underpin the MTFS. As a result of these pressures, the General Fund is currently forecasting a significant financial shortfall for 2022/23.
- 2.2 The impact of these new financial pressures the Council is facing cannot be underestimated and are not solely related to 2022/23. These inflationary increases will permanently increase the cost base of the Council and will have implications for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.3 As a result, the Council has implemented a range of mitigation actions, as part of a financial recovery programme, to ensure it retains a sustainable financial position in 2022/23, whilst a new Towards Financial Sustainability Programme is developed for the medium-term.

3. Amendments to Fees & Charges – Crematorium and Car Parking Sessional Fees

- 3.1 In response to the significant cost pressures that the Council was facing, a range of mitigating actions were developed in order to reduce expenditure or increase income levels. This included a review of fees and charges income to identify any areas where the cost of service provision had significantly increased. This review identified that the cost of maintaining and servicing the Council's car parks, primarily the running costs of the multi-storey car parks, and the cost of providing cremation services had both increased both significantly, primarily due to soaring energy prices and contractual commitments.
- 3.2 Increased fees and charges for these two specific service areas, to reflect the increase in their operating costs, were therefore agreed to be applied with effect from 1st December 2022. These increases were agreed under delegated authority, as per Financial Procedure Rules (forming part of the Council's Constitution), which allows the relevant Assistant Directors to amend fees and charges by +/- 50% following consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the relevant Portfolio Holders.
- 3.3 In relation to cremation fees, an increase of 12.5% was applied. This related to both residents and non-residents. A revised schedule of charges is as set out in Appendix A.
- 3.4 In relation to car parking sessional fees, individual increases vary across the range of car parks and specific tariffs, with an average increase of £0.27p per tariff. The highest increase is £1. A revised schedule of charges is as set out in Appendix B

4. Amendments to Fees & Charges – Christmas Market

- 4.1 The schedule of fees and charges for the Park & Ride element of the Christmas Market for 2022, were approved as part of the 2022/23 budget by Full Council in March 2022. However, the rounding of these charges was not applied, leaving the charges stated as pounds and pence. For ease and speed of payment, particularly for those customers using cash, it was agreed under delegation by the relevant Assistant Director that these charges would be rounded to the nearest pound as follows:

	Approved 2022/23 Fees	Proposed 2022/23 Fees
Pre Booking Online	£12.4	£12
Thursday	£13.4	£13
Friday	£14.4	£14
Saturday	£15.5	£15
Sunday	£14.4	£14
Minibus	£25.8	£25

- 4.2 The revised schedule for charges is set out in Appendix C.

5. Strategic Priorities

- 5.1 Income from fees and charges represents a significant proportion of the General Fund's overall revenue resources, supporting the delivery of the Council's MTFS and ultimately the Council's vision and strategic priorities.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance

Financial procedure rule 7.1.4 allows the following:-

In respect of services where fees and charges apply or may apply in circumstances where services are obliged through regulations to achieve cost recovery or where other market led factors influence the service and its charging structure, the relevant Assistant Director has the discretion to amend the set fees and charges by +/- 50%, after consulting with the Chief Finance Officer and relevant Portfolio Holder. Such an occurrence shall be reported by the Assistant Director to full Council at the earliest opportunity.

The increases being applied are less than +50% of the original fees for 2022/23. The Assistant Director for Health & Environment and the Assistant Director for Planning have therefore exercised their discretion in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders and the Chief Finance Officer in October 2022 and reported to full Council on the 17th January 2023, being the earliest opportunity after the charges were implemented, to do so.

The additional income generated by the increase in the car parking and crematorium fees and charges will be used to partially offset the significant budget shortfall, which is forecasted for 2022/23 and will contribute towards the ongoing budget pressures that the Council faces over the period of the MTFS. The additional income forecasted to arise from these increases in fees and charges is follows:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£	£	£	£	£
Crematorium	48,210	132,640	136,620	140,720	144,940
Carparking	196,690	144,370	148,700	153,170	157,760
Total	244,900	277,010	285,320	293,890	302,700

There are no specific financial implications arising from the amendments to the Christmas Market fees and charges.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no specific legal implications arising as a result of this report. The delegation to vary set fees and charges is provided for within the Financial Procedure Rules section of the Council's Constitution.

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

The potential for any Equality and Diversity issues to arise has been considered and it is concluded that no issues relating to this, nor the Human Rights Act 1988 are relevant.

7. Risk Implications

- 7.1 Any increase in fees and charges increases the risk that demand will be detrimentally impacted. In forecasting the likely levels of additional income to be generated from the in-year increases, an estimate of a potential reduction in demand/usage has been provided for.

Due to the reliance of income from fees and charges in MTFS and the sensitivity of them to changes a thorough risk assessment is undertaken as part of the MTFS and monitored on a regular basis with key income budgets reported to the Executive and Performance Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That Council notes the amendment of Car Parking, Crematorium and Christmas Market Fees and Charges in accordance with the relevant financial procedure rules.

How many appendices does the report contain?

Three

List of Background Papers:

None

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