

This report will be made public on 3 December 2024

Report Number **C/24/55**

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Status: Key Decision
Head of Service: Lydia Morrison, Interim Director, Governance and Finance
Cabinet Member: Councillor Tim Prater, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance

SUBJECT: FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

SUMMARY: This report focuses on the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 which will contribute towards meeting the council's 2025/26 budget objectives and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The Council's Fees and Charges Policy was revised and agreed by Cabinet on 15 November 2017 (report C/17/54) and was last received and noted in December 2023 (see appendix 1, report C/23/71).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out below because the fees and charges are essential to support the delivery of the MTFs and Budget Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/24/55.
2. To receive and note the Fees and Charges Policy for 2025/26 at Appendix 1.
3. To approve:
 - (i) The 2025/26 fees and charges which are set at the discretion of the Council for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, as outlined in Appendix 2;
 - (ii) The parking charges in Appendix 3;
 - (iii) The statutory charges subject to discretionary fees in Appendix 4.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Fees and Charges Policy sets out the Council's charging framework. The Policy is outlined within Appendix 1 in full. The report details the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate and keep pace with the costs associated with service delivery as they increase over time. The decision set on proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 will come into effect on 1 April 2025 unless otherwise stated.
- 1.2 In recent years, the use of charging has become an increasingly vital feature of the Council's medium term financial strategy, as pressures on revenue budget limit the extent to which subsidisation of discretionary services is feasible. Recovering the costs of these services from users where possible enhances sustainability of the Council's offer to residents and business beyond the statutory minimum.
- 1.3 As has been practice for a number of years, the proposal for 2025/26 is to apply the June CPI rate (for 2024: 2.8%) as the minimum for price increases. There are exceptions to this principle where an inflationary increase is anticipated to have an adverse impact on demand or where it would place the charge out of line with comparable services in neighbouring councils.
- 1.4 The proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2025/26 are detailed at Appendices 2 to 4. A high level summary of the fees and charges areas are highlighted below.

2 DISCRETIONARY FEES AND CHARGES – APPENDIX 2

GOVERNANCE & FINANCE

- 2.1.1 Street Naming and Numbering – all fees are to increase in line with June 2024 CPI rate except New Street/Building (>20 units) where a slightly higher rate is being proposed to distinguish between bands.
- 2.1.2 Court Cost – no increase proposed as it is an exception to the Fees & Charges policy. Any increases must be justifiable in court.

STRATEGY & RESOURCES

2.2 Governance, Law & Democracy

- 2.2.1 Legal Fees – proposed increases within Legal Services has been kept at 2.8% CPI rate as decision on the level of charge is based on factors such as who the tenant is, what the level of rent is etc. And average level of fee is maintained to make service available to a variety of service users and keeping cost in line with the market.

2.3 People & Customer Service

- 2.3.1 Cemeteries – The term length of the of ‘Deed of grant’ currently offered at 30 years is proposed to change to 25 years, all charges are proposed to rise in line with inflation, save for ‘Deed of grant’ for 50 years and 75 years with proposed fees to increase in line with amended annual charge due to new durations.
- 2.3.2 Hiring of council meeting rooms for all non-Folkestone & Hythe District Council meetings/functions – charges proposed reflects CPI uplift except for alignment of all other meeting rooms with Council Chamber charges from after 7pm and weekends (including bank holidays).
- 2.3.2 Use of drinks machine for non-Folkestone & Hythe District Council meetings/functions – The service area has proposed for fees that related charges be removed as no longer valid.
- 2.3.4 Life verifications – proposed fee for 25/26 is in line with CPI uplift and rounded to whole amount.

2.4 Planning & Building Control

- 2.4.1 Planning Pre-Application Charging Schedule – most pre app fees to increase by 5% following benchmarking exercise against other authorities. Following the benchmarking exercise, 2 new charges have been introduced to reflect charges at other authorities. Other new fees being proposed are: i) *Householder Drop In – General guidance including 30 minutes face to face meeting at the Civic Centre. No written notes and bookable only. *Not Pre-app advice* which is to ensure that applications from residents are in compliance with guidelines. ii) *New Householder extensions, alterations and others that impact a listed building fee (Written and meeting Fees)*, this resulting from the need of the involvement of Conservation Officer.
- 2.4.2 Sale of Documents - proposed increase is in line with inflation for fixed charge items (local plan, core strategy review). However, variable costs for miscellaneous documents, based on staff time.
- 2.4.3 Building Control – To ensure transparency and completeness, Building Control discretionary Fees which are currently published separately by the service area have now been included to the proposed Fees & Charges 25/26 Appendix 2. Fees are increasing to align charges with other local authorities.

HOUSING & OPERATIONS

2.5 REGULATORY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 2.5.1 Parking Services - proposed increases in line with inflation and rounded up to whole amount.
- 2.5.2 Waste & Recycling – It is proposed to add inflation to charges however Bulky Collection Service will need to be separated due to new legislation on POPs. Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)/Bulky Waste – Persistent Organic Pollutants are micro pollutants commonly found in upholstered and soft

furnishings. Production of POPs has been internationally banned since 2010s. The EA has introduced new regulations about the collection and disposal of items containing POPs. The new rules require separate collection and disposal by incineration. The implications for the bulky waste service are that separate collections of POPs (e.g. sofas) and non-POPs items will be required, which will result in two separate bulky waste collection charges needing to be made.

- 2.5.3 Private Lifeline Charges – service area is proposing achievable market rates for 25/26. 4 new charges are being introduced namely GSM Falls Detector Pendant (quarterly charge), Easy Press Adaptor, Lost Dispersed GSM Dispersed Alarm Unit and Lost GPS Device. For wristbands (per annum), this is no longer offered as so few clients with these, as such currently using old stock only.
- 2.5.4 Hythe Swimming Pool – Fees and charges for 2025/26 proposed are in line with CPI rate. Also proposed is a new charge for 5 pre-paid private lessons per child which attracts a 10% discount on a single price.
- 2.5.5 Taxi Licensing – Following benchmarking exercise undertaken by Budget Manager, most fees are being proposed in line with 2.8% inflation rate. The only exceptions to remain unchanged are Vehicle licence – Annual, Single Vehicle Operator and Multiple Vehicle Operator which are all subject to the provisions of s70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 which state that a 28-day public consultation must be held before fees can be changed.
- 2.5.6 Miscellaneous Licensing – fees are proposed to rise in line with cpi rate which means fees will be broadly comparable to the mean averages calculated in a benchmarking exercise. The exceptions to this are, i) Zoo Licensing - It was agreed during the last round of fees and charges review in August 2023 that to ensure full cost recovery and bring the fee more in line with the then calculated benchmarked mean average of £1569.25 the application fee would be increased from £661.00 to £1453.40 over a 2-year period. The first part of the increase to £1083.30 was applied to the 2024/25 fee. The second part of the increase to £1453.40 plus the inflation increase of 2.8% equaling £1494.10 should be applied to 2025/26 fee schedule. ii) Pavement Licenses – no longer applicable for 2025/26 due to Temporary Licensing regime replaced with a permanent scheme introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. Calculated mean averages for applications and renewals are respectively 57.5% and 60.7% lower than the proposed statutory maximums of £500 and £350 put forward for FHDC. However, it is anticipated that the Kent LAs used in this benchmarking exercise will likely increase their 2025/26 fees to either close to the statutory maximums or to the full statutory maximums.
- 2.5.7 Miscellaneous Licensing (New Charges) – proposed for 2025/26 are as follows: i) *New Applications* - The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new permanent Pavement Licensing regime replacing the temporary licensing measures. It also increased the statutory fee for applications and renewals from £100 to new maximums of £500 for applications and £350 for renewals as well as increasing the licensing period from 1yr to 2yrs. ii) *Renewals* - New maximum statutory fee introduced (as per above).
- 2.5.8 Scrap Metal Licensing – proposed increases in line with cpi rate.

- 2.5.9 Personal & Premises Licenses - proposed increases in line with rate however for Premise Licence Pre-Application Schedule there are no quoted fees for this service in 3 out of the 4 Kent LAs used in the bench marking exercise.
- 2.5.10 Dog Control – fees are proposed to increase by inflation and rounded up to whole amounts, save the veterinary fees which attracts variable charge. For this, the council can charge up to £175 without authorisation but anything over must be agreed by the Environmental Protection Manager before any medical work is carried out on the dog.
- 2.5.11 Pollution Environment Health – fees are proposed in line with cpi rate.
- 2.5.12 Food and Safety – most increases are proposed in line with inflation, save the ‘Food Hygiene Scheme - re-rating’ ; following the application of the mean average fee used in conducting benchmarking exercise across 6 of FHDC’s neighbouring LAs, the service area is proposing an additional increase from £162.10 to £185 in order to bring the FHDC charge in line with the current mean average.
- 2.5.13 Private Water Supply Sampling – proposed increases in line with inflation.
- 2.5.14 Caravan Site Licensing – fees are proposed to increase in line with inflation.

2.6 HOUSING

- 2.6.1 Housing Revenue Account – most charges proposed are in line with cpi rate with few exceptions slightly above inflation to maximise income. A new charge ‘Controlled Entry Visit’, to serve as a deterrent is being proposed in 25/26. For the new hardwired lifeline system which all tenants will have by April 2025, the proposed charge reflects an increase to recover cost.

NB: CLT agreed in July 2023 to phase in the full cost recovery of the new hardwired system, with 50% of the increase being applied in 2025/26 and the final 50% being applied in 2026/27. Therefore, the fee will increase to £5.15 in 2026/27 to ensure full cost recovery.

- 2.6.2 Supporting People - proposed increases in line with inflation.
- 2.6.3 Leaseholder Services – all fees proposed in line with inflation save for Leasehold management fee (leasehold/shared ownership/HRA commercial) which are based on robust calculated cost of service. No increase since 2019. Residents consulted.
- 2.6.4 Housing Standards – proposed charge is in line with applied cpi rate.

2.7 CORPORATE ASSETS & DEVELOPMENT

- 2.7.1 Hire of Land – fees have been increased with inflation.
- 2.7.2 Outdoor Sports and Recreation – feedback from football clubs and teams indicate that pitch prices are too expensive and should be reduced or at the

least stay the same as last year. In view of this, fees for 2025/26 will be held at 2024 current charge.

2.7.3 Royal Military Canal – proposed fees are in line with cpi rate.

2.7.4 Beach huts – ancillary charges proposed to increase in line with inflation. Rentals are covered separately by the lease agreements.

2.7.5 Corporate Transactions – proposed fees are in line with inflation

2.7.6 Memorial Benches & Trees – proposed increases in line with inflation

3 PARKING CHARGES 2025/26 – APPENDIX 3

3.1 A deep review on proposed charges was carried out by the service manager, with full details provided in the appendix attached. Key matters to highlight are as follows:

Off Street

- I. All car parks with standard tariffs increased from £1.80 to £2 per hour.
- II. New seasonal tariffs (April- September) to be introduced in all seafront car parks. Charges from April-Sept to be increased to £2.50 per hour but will revert to standard tariffs (£2 per hour) from October-March.
- III. Chargeable hours to be extended from 8am-6pm to 8am-8pm in all seafront car parks during April-Sept. Chargeable hours to revert to 8am-6pm during October-March.

On-Street

- I. On-street charges (mostly seasonal) to increase from £2 per hour to £2.60 per hour to reflect increases in seasonal car park charges.
- II. Hotel guest permits to increase from £4 per 24 hours to £6 per 24 hours.
- III. Resident permits increased by £3 to £45
- IV. Business permits increased from £80 to £90
- V. Parking suspension charge increased from £14 per space per day to £30 per space per day to help address the issue of block booking.

4. STATUTORY CHARGES SUBJECT TO DISCRETIONARY FEES – APPENDIX 4

- 4.1 Local Land charges – The majority of fees have been proposed to increase by inflation.
- 4.2 Housing – fees have been proposed to increase by inflation.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

5.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Income targets are not achieved resulting in a budget	High	Medium	All fees and charges and income budgets are reviewed in detail each year to ensure

deficit			that they are reasonable and achievable.
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6. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

7.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

As a general rule, the Council is under a duty to act fairly in its decision-making, including exercising its discretion to increase relevant fees and charges. The Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a wide ambit of power to charge for its services and section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 gives the Council capacity to charge for relevant services; on the basis it is doing so without 'trading' (or making a profit,

7.2 Finance Officer's Comments (MO)

The financial implications are set out in the main body of the report.

7.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

The budget report to Full Council in February 2025 will include an Equality Impact Assessment of the budget recommendations for 2025/26.

7.4 Climate Change Implications

As this report only presents the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 there are no climate change implications arising from it.

8. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting.

Monisola Omoni – Principal Accountant

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Budget working papers

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Fees and Charges Policy

Appendix 2 - Discretionary Fees and Charges Schedule.

Appendix 3 - Parking Schedule.

Appendix 4 - Statutory Fees Subject to Discretionary Charges Schedule.

APPENDIX 1

General Fees and Charges Policy

All fees and charges are subject to the following general policy.

1. There shall be full cost recovery so that general council taxpayers are not subsidising the costs of an optional service. Any exceptions to this rule can only be agreed by cabinet. Where there is a substantial change between the current charge and the full cost recovery amount, the increase can be staggered over a period of up to three financial years.

In addition:

2. Fees and charges are increased by the current rate of inflation (generally rounded up to the nearest 10p).

The main exceptions to this rule are:

- Court fees
- Room bookings at the civic centre – voluntary organisations
- Car parking – as subject to review in the Car Park Strategy
- Building control – subject to full cost recovery of building control chargeable element.
- Contract charges with other organisations which are subject to separate negotiations.
- Commercial activities - where fees and charges need to respond to market conditions or their ability to compete effectively for tenders. These will be discussed with the relevant portfolio holder at the appropriate time but will be on the basis of covering all costs at a minimum.
- Statutory charges - over which the council has no control and will be introduced as per the respective guidance and will not be subject to this policy.

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