

Fees and Charges 2025/26

Report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

1. That the fees and charges for 2025/26, as set out in the annexes to the report, be approved.
2. That Heads of Service be authorised to increase relevant fees and charges in line with statutory levels should they change following this report.

SUMMARY:

- Fees and charges are set annually for the forthcoming financial year and are presented for approval.
- Significant increases and changes from 2024/25 are explained in the body of the report.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Fees and charges are reported annually to Councillors as part of the budget process. This report provides information on proposed fees and charges for 2025/26.
- 1.2 By reporting fees and charges separately, as an individual component of the budget process, Councillors can provide direction on the level of charges across the Council.
- 1.3 Proposed increases to existing charges and charges for new services are attached in the annexes to this report for approval.
- 1.4 The main inflation index is the Consumer Price Index. This is currently (September 2024) running at 1.7%. In preparing the fees and charges, services have been advised to take into account increases in staffing and other costs with an inflationary guide of 2% - 2.5%, which is expected to be the prevailing rate at the start of the new financial year.
- 1.5 At its meeting in August 2024, the Budget Panel indicated that as far as possible, increases in charges within the control of the Council should be minimised unless increases in associated costs justified it.

2 Background

- 2.1 Heads of Service were asked to provide details of the fees and charges they wish to levy in 2025/26 for the services they provide.

2.2 The attached Annexes show the level of charges in 2024/25, the proposed charges for 2025/26 and the percentage change between the two.

3 Consultations / Communications

3.1 Heads of Service and managers have been asked to provide details of the charges they wish to make in 2025/26.

4 Fees and Charges – changes by Service

4.1 The following paragraphs give explanations of any charges that are recommended to be increased by more than inflation or where the basis for charging for an item has changed.

4.2 Community and Leisure (Annex 1)

For sporting activities, the majority of charges have been frozen or increased in line with the inflationary guide.

Exceptions to this are:

- Some adult charges, such as the day ticket for the running track at Charlton Sports Centre, are recommended to increase by a little more than the inflationary guide (3.33% or 10p). This is so that the total is easily divisible by two to calculate the junior rate at 50%.
- At Charlton Sports Centre, the charge for the BMX floodlights is to be removed as it is no longer applicable.
- At Ganger Farm, peak and off-peak charges for the artificial pitches have been removed and replaced by an all-day rate. The recommended increase in the charge is approximately 4%. This is to reflect the maintenance and running cost of the artificial pitches which is the same throughout the day and is also higher than the cost of maintaining the grass pitches.
- At Andover Sports Academy, peak and off-peak charges have been removed for the artificial pitch and replaced by a flat rate to reflect that the maintenance and running costs are the same throughout the day. Charges for the half pitch and quarter pitch hire have increased by 9.84% and 17.88% respectively to bring the calculation of the charges in line with Ganger Farm (70% and 50% of full pitch fee). A new charge for half pitch floodlights is also to be introduced at £10.15 per hour.

At the Lights, the majority of charges are to be frozen or increased within the inflationary guide. The exceptions are:

- An increase of £5 (7.69%) for technical services in order to ensure that costs of the technician are recovered.
- An increase of £2 (15.38%) for ticket printing (per show) due to increases in the cost of paper, thermal print and the inks used.

All charges related to cemeteries are recommended to be frozen.

4.3 **Corporate (Annex 2)**

Due to the changes in the size and publication frequency of Test Valley News, the charges for advertising have been deleted as this will no longer be an option.

4.4 **Environmental Service (Annex 3)**

The majority of charges are to be increased by approximately 2% - 3% to reflect inflation.

Charges for shopping trolley returns are to be increased by 6.67% and 14.29%. These fees are paid by local supermarkets and haven't been increased since they were introduced in 2011.

Charges for brake roller tests are to be increased by £1.50 to £30, an increase of 5.26%. This is a charge to commercial companies and is broadly in line with other local suppliers.

4.5 **Finance and Revenues Service (Annex 4)**

The charges shown in the Finance and revenues section remain unchanged from 2024/25.

4.6 **Housing and Environmental Health Service (Annex 5)**

The majority of licence charges have been increased by approximately 1.5% - 2.5% to reflect inflation.

The registration fee for hairdressers has been reduced to £NIL. It is still a requirement for hairdressers to be registered but is not usually considered necessary to carry out a proactive inspection, rather simply add the new business to a database which does not justify a fee.

Charges for houses in multiple occupation (HMO) have changed significantly. The way in which these charges are calculated has changed, with some reducing and some increasing to reflect the amount of resources required for each part. HMO licence applicants pay a combination of Part A and Part B fees. Part A fees (licence applications and renewals) have decreased by £155 (25.41%) and £176 (32.0%) respectively (with one small fee remaining the same). Part B fees (operation charges and supplementary operations charges) have increased by £168 (207.41%) and £55 (20%) respectively. The net outcome, however, results in just a small percentage increase for the customer, with compliant landlords seeing an increase of 1.88%. Non-compliant landlords will see an increase of 7% which reflects the additional work required, and hopefully helps to discourage non-compliance.

Annual fees for caravan site licences are reducing by between 10.71% and 25.53%. These fees must be calculated based on the amount of officer time spent on caravan work for the preceding 12 months. This is the first time since 2016 that fees have been reduced as high costs from earlier years was previously being recouped.

Charges for pest control have been increased roughly in line with inflation.

Food Register enquiry charges are to be removed as these requests should be dealt with as a Freedom of Information request which would be free.

The wording of the charge for enquiries for Pollution and Contaminated Land has been changed to reflect more accurately the narrow scope of what is chargeable i.e. just requests under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

4.7 Legal and Democratic Service (Annex 6)

The majority of fees in this service are statutorily set and remain the same as for 2024/25.

For local land charges, there is no increase for the LLC1 fee and the associated parcel fee has been removed as the Land Charges register function (which the LLC1 fee relates to) is planned to transfer to HM Land Registry (HMLR) in (possibly the first quarter of) 2025/26 after which TVBC will no longer be responsible for this aspect of searches. Should we receive any LLC1 requests in the next financial year before the transfer to HMLR, the charge has been kept at £15 as that is what HMLR will charge.

The Con29 and associated parcel fee within Local Land Charges have been increased by £5 (4.08%) and £2.50 (11.11%) respectively to reflect likely increases in charges from Hampshire County Council.

The majority of licence fees remain frozen, with increases roughly in line with inflation for scrap metal dealers (approximately 2.5%) and driver fees (approximately 3%) in order to ensure that costs are covered.

The Licensing Committee on 3rd October 2024 recommended the introduction of two new charges with effect from 1st January 2025 for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles:

- Resitting failed driver knowledge test £30
- Approved vehicle door sign £6

4.8 Planning and Building Service (Annex 7)

Planning pre-application enquiry fees are currently being reviewed by officers and any changes are anticipated to be reported to Cabinet in January in the Revenue budget update report.

Building control fees are recommended to be increased by 2.5% - 3%.

4.9 Property and Asset Management Service (Annex 8)

Linking to corporate plan objectives to promote economic development and vibrancy in town centres, car parking charges remain frozen and continue to be charged at levels last reviewed in 2020/21.

The fee for the issue of quarterly bus passes under the major development area scheme and temporary road closures remain frozen.

All room booking and other charges have been increased in line with inflation.

5 Risk Management

- 5.1 An evaluation of the risks associated with the matters in this report indicates that further risk assessment is not needed because the changes / issues covered do not represent significant risks.

6 Resource Implications

- 6.1 The impact of the proposals will be considered when preparing Service estimates for 2025/26. Where fees are increased without any expected detriment to demand, it is expected that there will additional income to help address the forecast budget gap.

7 Equality Issues

- 7.1 No equalities issues have been identified in the preparation of the report and no potential for unlawful discrimination or negative impact has been identified, therefore a full EQIA has not been carried out.

8 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 8.1 Heads of Service have considered the services currently available to the public and the Fees and Charges applicable to them.
- 8.2 Based on recommendations from Heads of Service, this report seeks approval of the rates of fees and charges for 2025/26.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	8	File Ref:	N/A
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	20 November 2024