

Brighton & Hove City Council

City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

Agenda Item 40

Subject: Fees and Charges 2024-25

Date of meeting: 23rd January 2024

Report of: Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture;
Executive Director, Health & Adult Social Care; Executive
Director for Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed 2024/25 fees and charges for the service areas covered by the City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee, in accordance with corporate regulations and policy.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Committee agrees the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out within the report.

2.2 That Committee delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment & Culture (in relation to paragraphs 3.5 - 3.12), the Executive Director of Health & Adult Social Care (in relation to paragraphs 3.13 – 3.17) the Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities (in relation to paragraphs 3.18 - 3.20) to change fees and charges as notified and set by central Government during the year.

Note: If the above recommendations are not agreed, or if the committee wishes to amend the recommendations, then the item will need to be referred to the Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee meeting on 8th February 2024 to be considered as part of the overall 2024/54 budget proposals. This is because the 2024/25 budget proposals are developed on the assumption that fees and charges are agreed as recommended and any failure to agree, or a proposal to agree different fees and charges, will have an impact on the overall budget proposals, which means it needs to be dealt with by Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee as per the requirements of the constitution. This does not fetter the committee's ability to make recommendations to Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 As part of the budget setting process Executive Directors are required to agree changes to fees and charges through relevant Committee Meetings. The management of fees and charges is fundamental both to the financial performance of the City Council and the achievement of the Council's corporate priorities. The council's Corporate Fees & Charges Policy requires that all fees and charges are reviewed at least annually and should normally be increased in line with the cost of providing the service to maintain income in proportion to the net cost of service.
- 3.2 The Corporate Fees & Charges Policy also stipulates that increases above or below an agreed 'corporate rate of inflation' should be approved by committee. However, it should be noted that the corporate rate of inflation (3.5% for 2024/25) is not a default rate of increase and is a financial planning assumption only, set early in the financial year, and should not therefore determine actual increases which should normally reflect current and projected inflationary cost pressures to ensure that income is maintained in proportion to expenditure.
- 3.3 The committee are advised that if the proposed fees & charges recommended in this report are not agreed, or if the committee wishes to amend the recommendations, then the item will normally need to be referred to the Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee meeting on 8th February 2024 to be considered as part of the overall 2024/25 budget proposals. This is because the 2024/25 final budget proposals will have been developed on the assumption that fees and charges are agreed as recommended and therefore any rejection or amendment of the proposed fees and charges may have an impact on the overall budget proposals, which means it would need to be dealt with by Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee as per the requirements of the constitution. However, this does not fetter the committee's ability to make alternative recommendations to Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee.
- 3.4 It is not always possible when amending fees and charges to increase by the exact inflation figure due to rounding. As a result, some fees and charges are rounded for ease of payment and/or administration.

City Transport – Public Spaces

- 3.5 It is proposed to increase most of the Public Spaces fees and charges by 10% to ensure all costs are recovered.
- 3.6 Changes in legislation relating to fees for objects on the highway have resulted in an increase in the cap. It is proposed to increase fees and charges for objects on the highways to better reflect the costs to the authority in maintaining this service. With the introduction of a new application or late renewal fee, existing tables and chairs licence fees are capped to support small businesses.
- 3.7 The proposed fees and charges are set out in Appendix 1.

City Environmental Management

City Parks - Allotments, Parks and Sports Bookings

- 3.8 It is proposed to set Tennis Court charges for Adult and Concessionary bookings to remain competitive to other Community Interest Companies. This will reduce the Tennis Court charges from £10.10 and £9.00 for Adult and Concessionary bookings to £9.00 and £8.00 respectively. It is anticipated the reduction of tennis court fees would encourage more bookings and generate income to meet existing income targets.
- 3.9 It is also proposed to uplift charges for allotments by 10% to contribute to the overall cost of providing the service. It is also proposed to uplift remaining sports bookings and Parks Charges by the corporate rate of inflation of 3.5%. Details of City Parks fees and charges are set out in Appendix 2.

City Clean - Flyering Licenses

- 3.10 Flyering licences fees are set at a rate that is considered reasonable to allow appropriate regulation and minimisation of flyering activity and to partly recover the cost of work required to clear the litter generated from flyering activity. It is proposed that flyering licences are uplifted by 10%. All licences will be valid for 24 hours.

Garden Waste Collection Service

- 3.11 The existing garden waste collection service charge is currently £85 per household per year. The proposal is to increase the garden waste charges by £9 to £94 per household per year which is comparable with neighbouring authorities.

Bulky Waste Collection Service

- 3.12 The current Bulky Waste fee is £60 for three items, with each extra item charged at £12 each and white goods charged at £45. The proposal is to maintain Bulky Waste fees at current year levels. It is anticipated the maintaining of the fee will encourage users to the service in order to meet existing income targets. Details of City Clean fees and charges are set out in Appendix 2.

Bereavement Services

- 3.13 This year's fees & charges review for Bereavement Services has again considered the continuing competitive market and all other options available to bereaved families, when making funeral arrangements. The majority of our funeral business comes from Local Independent Funeral Directors who have the difficulty of trying to compete with the larger companies (e.g Dignity/ Co-op / CPJ Field). These companies currently have established and major national advertising campaigns offering low-cost funerals – cremation only, no funeral service etc. We are proposing an average

increase on cremation fees of around 5.5%, and 8.5% on our burials in our cemeteries. Despite this increase it is hoped we can minimise the impact on the Local Independent funeral directors at a time when, we acknowledge, they will be impacted by rising costs due to the current and continuing financial crisis. We hope to remain as their crematorium of choice in the local area. It should be noted there is a direct competitor immediately adjacent to our Woodvale Cemetery and Crematorium grounds, which is privately owned by Dignity Funeral Services, the largest owner of private crematoria in the country.

- 3.14 Benchmarking has been carried out with local neighbours where comparable fees and charges are available. This provides valuable information because they are alternative service providers who customers are most likely to opt for as an alternative to Brighton & Hove City Council's services.
- 3.15 As with previous reviews, there are no proposals to change charging policies in relation to children. The proposals are formulated to be consistent with the general principle of cost recovery as already stated, including maintaining the facilities we have at Woodvale where our Crematorium chapels and grounds are grade 2 listed.
- 3.16 The proposals to increase cremation, burial and memorialisation fees from 1 April 2024 will generate an estimated additional £0.091m assuming business levels remain consistent with the 2022/23 year. These proposals are based on the service continuing to follow best practice in line with guidance from the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management (ICCM), a national organisation providing policy and best practice guidance to Burial and Cremation authorities.
- 3.17 Please see Appendix 3 proposed Bereavement Services fees and charges and Appendix 4 Bereavement Services benchmarking.

Safer Communities

Trading Standards

- 3.18 It is proposed to increase the non-statutory fees and charges in line with the September RPI rate of inflation at 8.9%.

Environmental Health

- 3.19 It is proposed to increase the majority of the non-statutory fees and charges in line with the September RPI rate of inflation at 8.9%.
- 3.20 The proposed fees and charges for Safer Communities are set out in Appendix 5.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The proposed fees and charges in this report have been prepared in accordance with the council's fees and charges policy and form part of the

proposed budget strategy. They take account of the requirement to increase by the corporate inflation rate of +3.5% (unless otherwise stated) and consideration has been given to other factors such as statutory requirement, cost recovery and prices charged by competitor / comparator organisations.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 Not undertaken

6. Conclusion

6.1 Fees and charges are considered to be an important source of income in enabling services to be sustained and provided. A wide range of services are funded or part funded by fees and charges including those detailed in this report. The overall budget strategy aims to ensure that fees and charges are maintained or increased as a proportion of gross expenditure through identifying income generating opportunities, ensuring that charges for discretionary services and trading accounts cover costs, and ensuring that fees and charges keep pace with price inflation and/or competitor and comparator rates.

6.2 Fees and charges budgets for 2024/25 are assumed to increase by a standard inflation rate of +3.5% with the exception of those listed within this report. The council's Corporate Fees and Charges Policy requires that all fees and charges are reviewed at least annually and should normally be increased by either; the standard rate of inflation, statutory increase or increases in the costs of providing services.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The fees and charges recommended in this report have been reviewed in line with the Corporate Fees & Charges Policy and all relevant regulations and legislation. The anticipated recurring financial impacts of fee changes will be reflected within service revenue budgets. Increases to meet the corporate rate of inflation of 3.5% are normally applied to all council income budgets as a minimum but fees & charges should normally be set to recover costs and/or maintain income in proportion to expenditure. Increases above or below the corporate rate of inflation require approval by the relevant service committee or Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee and can result in additional contributions toward the cost of services and/or corporate and service overheads. This can also result in the achievement of a net budget saving to the council. Where this is the case, this will be reflected in Budget proposals for the relevant service and will be incorporated within the revenue budget report to Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee and Budget Council in February 2024. Income from fees and charges is monitored as part of the Targeted Budget Monitoring (TBM) process.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 08/01/2024

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The council needs to establish for each of the charges imposed both the power to levy charges of that type, and, where applicable, the power to set the charge at a particular level. In some cases, the amount of the charges is set by Government. In other cases where a figure is not prescribed, for example the general power to charge for discretionary services under the Local Government Act 2003, the amount that can be charged is restricted to cost recovery. In some prescribed cases, such as charging for trade waste collection, legislation enables the Council to set charges at a commercial rate. In all cases the council must act reasonably and ensure that any statutory formalities which govern particular charges are complied with.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted: 15/01/2024

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 Management of fees and charges is fundamental to the achievement of council priorities. The council's fees and charges policy aims to increase the proportion of costs met by the service user. Charges, where not set externally, are raised by corporate inflation rates as a minimum unless there are legitimate anti-poverty considerations.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1 There are no other significant implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Proposed City Transport (Public Spaces) Fees & Charges 2024/25
2. Proposed City Environmental Management Fees and Charges 2024/25
3. Proposed Bereavement Services Fees and Charges 2024/25
4. Bereavement Services Benchmarking 2024/25
5. Proposed Safer Communities Fees and Charges 2024/25

2. Background documents

1. None