



## OPEN REPORT GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Governance and Resources Committee – 16 February 2023

### FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2023/24

**Joint Report of the Director of Resources, Director of Community and Environmental Services, Director of Regulatory Services and Director of Corporate and Customer Services**

#### Report Authors and Contact Details

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#### Wards Affected

District Wide

#### Report Summary

This report seeks approval for proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 in respect of Community and Environmental Services, Corporate and Customer Services and Regulatory Services.

#### Recommendation

1. That the fees and charges recommended in Appendices 1 – 13 of the report are approved and implemented with effect from 1 April 2023, or as soon as practicable thereafter.
2. Subject to the approval of the Clean & Green Review report, which is due to be presented to Council in March, any required amendments to the fees and charges will go to the relevant policy committee meeting to approve changes.

#### List of Appendices

Schedules of Proposed Fees

Appendix 1	Pest and Dog Control
Appendix 2	Waste and Recycling
Appendix 3	Cemeteries
Appendix 4	Agricultural Business Centre – Room Hire
Appendix 5	Stall Markets and Farmers’ Markets
Appendix 6	Parks, Recreation Grounds and Public Spaces
Appendix 7	Car Parks
Appendix 8	Events
Appendix 9	Corporate Services
Appendix 10(a)(b)(c)	Environmental Health
Appendix 11	Licensing
Appendix 12	Estates and Facilities
Appendix 13	Planning Pre-application Advice

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration of report by Council or other committee**

Not applicable

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from Press or Public**

No

## **Fees and charges for 2023/24**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to consider an annual review of the fees and charges for services provided across the Council.
- 1.2 In recent years fees and charges have been increased, in general, by an amount that slightly exceeds inflation rates at the time. Charging above the current rate of inflation will generate higher levels of income in real terms (assuming no significant customer resistance) and will assist in balancing the budget for 2023/24 given the significant inflationary increases on Council spending.
- 1.3 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 11.1% in October 2022 and had fallen to 10.5% in December 2022, the last figures available at the time of writing this report. The usual practice is to inflate fees and charges for the coming year by slightly more than the current CPI e.g. around 10%. However, increases of this magnitude might not be acceptable to the public at these times of a cost of living crisis and might result in customer resistance. Therefore, service managers have used their knowledge of their services and customers to set the proposed fees and charges.
- 1.4 Where officers have recommended fee increases of more than 5% or that fees be frozen at the 2022/23 level, an explanation has been provided in the report.
- 1.5 Appendices 1 – 13 contain schedules of the existing and recommended charges.

### **2. Report for 2023/24**

#### **2.1 Community and Environmental Services**

**Appendix 1** details the existing and proposed fees and charges for Pest Control and Stray Dog Service. The recommended fees for dog control include an increase of 10%. The fee increase reflects the increased cost of looking after stray dogs and it is recommended that this is passed on to owners.

The Pest Control service remains suspended since the pandemic as it requires further benchmarking and will be discussed as part of the Clean and Green Review. The previous costs meant the Council operated the service at a loss which is something the review team will be assessing against other local authorities and the private sector.

**Appendix 2** details charges for waste and recycling collections. The recommended fees include an increase of around 4% with the following exceptions:

- It is proposed that subscriptions to the Garden Waste Collection Service be retained at £50.00, which was the price agreed by Members in 2019.

Subscribers paid a reduced fee of £35 in 2022/23 to reflect historic service disruption.

- It is proposed that the charges for bulky collections should increase by 13.4% to reflect the charge that the Council receives from Serco. The increase means the Council will not continue to subsidise this service. Due to the large increase in cost these fees do not include administration costs or any other overhead costs incurred by the Council.
- The charge for a replacement 240l green wheeled bin (if the household has a current subscription) will increase by 56% from £16.70 to £26.00 to bring it in line with the supplier's charges.

**Appendix 3** details the existing and recommended fees and charges in respect of cemeteries and burials. The recommended fees include an increase of 5%.

A new Memorial Bench Policy is due to be presented to the Community and Environment Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> February, which includes new fees relating to the cost to purchase the bench, administration and installation and costs for the relevant plaques. If the new policy is approved, these costs are to commence from April 2023.

**Appendix 4** details the existing and recommended fees and charges in respect of room hire at the Bakewell Agricultural Business Centre. The recommended fees include an increase of 5% with the exception of the Conference Room hire.

It is proposed that the conference room hire fee is frozen at the current price as this has been highlighted as a key area that could help the ABC to increase bookings. The team plan to improve the offer available to conference room hirers including improved Wi-Fi, refreshments, heating and competitive pricing.

The ABC no longer hires out Meeting Room 1 as this is now included within Bagshaw's lease. The proposal is that those prices convert to hire of the conference room for less than 20 occupants, again to offer a competitive price for hire requests for small amounts of attendees.

**Appendix 5** details the existing fees and charges and those recommended for approval with effect from 1st April 2023 in respect of Bakewell stall market and Famers' Market.

In December 2022 a price comparison exercise was undertaken to compare the 2022/23 pricing structure with mix of local and similar occupancy level markets. The results are shown in the table below:

Market	Stall size	Price	Stall Set up
<b>Bakewell</b>	<b>9ft/12ft</b>	<b>£26.30/£34.20 Erected</b>	<b>Erected</b>
Chesterfield	8ft/12ft	£9.70 - £20.10 Fixed	Fixed
Ormskirk	10' x 4'	£27.50	Self-erect

Louth	10ft	£15.00	Erected
Loughborough	10ft	£25.00	N/A
Retford	10ft	£14.50	Erected
Stamford	10ft	£23.85	Erected
Beverley	12ft	£25.00	Self-erect
Beverley	12ft	£54.00	Erected

- It is proposed that market stall rents are again frozen for 2023/24 to help retain and offer some support to current traders and encourage new traders. Bakewell Monday Stall Market and monthly Farmers Market continue to be successful markets even though they have seen a decline in trader numbers since the pandemic. Based on the price comparison above Bakewell Market is one of the more expensive markets though still competitive based on the size of market, which might not be the case in rents were to increase. A number of the markets above have also frozen their prices over the last few years.
- It's apparent from talking to traders at our own markets, other markets and the National Market Traders Federation that the cost of living crisis is effecting traders both in terms of their costs (travel, stock) and customer spend which is resulting in a decline in market traders.

**Appendix 6** details the existing fees and charges and those recommended for approval with effect from 1st April 2023 in respect of parks, recreation grounds and public spaces. Most of the recommended fees include a 5% increase.

There is a 10% increase on the Bowling Green fees due to the rising costs of the maintenance on the green and the current charge is very low. The fee will also be changed from 'per match' to 'per hour'; this is due to a match lasting up to 5 hours and it isn't viable to continue charging this way.

There is an introduction of a new fee which is for Hall Leys Park tennis courts, hire of a single court per hour. This is on the proviso that the planned project working in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association to fully fund and resurface the tennis courts goes ahead. The fee is recommended by the Lawn Tennis Association.

Fixed Penalty Charge Notices for breaches of the Public Spaces Protection Order and Littering offences which is part of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 have now been included in the fees & charges.

### **Leisure Centres**

Under the terms of the contract with Freedom Leisure, responsibility for setting fees and charges for leisure centres transferred to them from 1 August 2018. The next price increase is due in April 2023 once approved by the District

Council's Contract Manager. At the time of writing this report details of these price increases had not been received.

**Appendix 7** outlines fees relating to car parking permits, passes and season tickets.

- An increase of 5% is recommended for annual permits for "residents only" car parks;
- A 10% increase is proposed for season tickets and for replacement or second Residents Free Parking Concession badges;
- It is proposed that the charge for a 3 day Rover pass should be increased by 37.61% to £15 and that the charge for a 7 day Rover pass should be increased by 25% to £32 to reduce historic subsidisation.

The car parking charges are currently been reviewed by the Car Parking Member Group and any changes will be reported to Council later in the year.

CCTV footage requests from Insurance Companies or Solicitors are currently provided free of charge; proposals are to charge for this work from April 2023.

**Appendix 8** outlines fees relating to events. An increase of 5% is recommended.

The fees for Matlock Bath Illuminations will be discussed and agreed by the Illuminations working group, with fees recommended to the relevant committee at a later date.

## 2.2 Corporate and Customer Services

**Appendix 9** details the current fees and charges and those recommended for the various streams within Corporate and Customer Services.

For Local Land Charges, the level of fees charged by the District Council must also accord with the Local Authorities (England) (Charges for Property Searches) Regulations 2008. The Regulations specify that the charge made in connection with a property search must not amount to more than the actual cost of providing the service. Increases of 4% are recommended except for charges for Con29R and Con29O, which are not subject to regulations and it is proposed to increase these by 10% in line with inflation.

Charges for legal services have been reviewed and brought up to date. Some fees for S106 obligations have been frozen but most proposed fees are being increased by an average of 5%.

The fee for authorising proof of life for overseas pensioners is recommended to increase by 10.3% from £29.00 to £32.00. This is a discretionary service and the proposed increase reflects inflation and will not reduce the number of individuals wishing to take advantage of the service.

The proposed fees and charges for street naming and numbering and Section 106 Monitoring have been increased by 10% to reflect inflation; fees for road closures are recommended to be increased by 4.3% to 4.6%.

## 2.3 Regulatory Services

**Appendix 10** details the existing fees and charges and, those recommended for approval with effect from 1st April 2023 in respect of food hygiene, private sector housing and private water supplies. Recommended fees have been increased by 5%.

**Appendix 11** details the existing fees and charges and, those recommended for approval with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 in respect of licensing. It is proposed that all-locally set licensing fees should be increased by 5%. In addition, new fees are suggested to cover the costs of the proposed permanent pavement licensing regime, to recognise the establishment of a contract only private hire vehicle business stream (school and community contracts) and an administration fee where taxi licence applications are processed but are not issued.

**Appendix 12** sets out a proposed schedule of charges for the services provided by our Estates and Facilities Team. It is proposed that these charges be increased by 5%. The Council offers a reduction in these fees where the work relates to temporary installations on District Council land by town and parish councils and no charge is levied in relation to work on community asset transfers or emergency works licences.

**Appendix 13** sets out fees for Planning Pre-application Advice. An increase of 5% is recommended to cover the additional costs (based on the average salary settlement) of providing this service.

## 3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 A range of fee increases was calculated for consideration (from 1% to 10% in 1% increments) for all fees and charges. Service managers also considered other options for their services where appropriate, including freezing fees at the 2022/23 level. When considering significant increases, service managers haven't taken account of potential customer resistance, especially given the current cost of living crisis.
- 3.2 One option would be to freeze all fees and charges at the 2022/23 level. However, that would not reflect the increased costs that the Council faces where fees are intended to cover costs. Increasing fees and charges will contribute towards balancing the budget for 2023/24 and achieving a sustainable financial position.

## 4. Consultation

- 4.1 The fees will be publicised after approval by this committee.

## **5. Timetable for Implementation**

- 5.1 The proposed fees are due to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2023, or as soon as practicable thereafter (e.g. from Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April).

## **6. Policy Implications**

- 6.1 The Council charges fees to cover the cost of some of the services that are provided to make progress in delivering its Corporate Priorities.

## **7. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 The proposed increases are mostly in the range of 0% to 10%, with most being around 5%. In March 2022, the Council approved a corporate savings target to make savings or generate additional revenue income to close a funding gap of £250,000 p.a. in the short to medium term. The funding gap is expected to increase significantly from 2023/24 due to inflationary pressures and expected reductions in government grants. Increasing fees and charges will contribute towards closing the funding gap.

- 7.2 It should also be acknowledged that inflation is expected to remain at high levels until at least June 2023. The Bank of England expects inflation to fall back from the middle of 2023 towards their 2% target in 2024.

- 7.3 Income resulting from the recommended revised fees and charges will be included in the draft revenue spending proposals for the financial year 2023/24 to be considered at the (budget setting) meeting of the full Council on 2 March 2023.

- 7.4 As some fees have been frozen and most of the others increased by 4% to 5% (though some have been increased by 10% - the current rate of inflation), it is hoped that customer resistance to the proposed fees will not be significant (see paragraph 11.1 below).

- 7.5 The financial risk is therefore assessed as low.

## **8. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 This report seeks approval for proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 in respect of Community and Environmental Services, Corporate and Customer Services and Regulatory Services.

- 8.2 Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 enables the Council to provide and charge for recreational facilities in its area.

- 8.3 Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 enables the Council to charge for a discretionary service where the recipient agrees to its provision. The Council

is afforded ability to charge by statute. This report is updating those fees and charges.

- 8.4 The 2 recommended decisions to be made connected to this report are to (1) to implement the new fees and charges and (2) in relation to the forth coming Clean and Green review. Therefore the risk in relation to the report's recommendations has been assessed at the current time as low.

## **9. Equalities Implications**

- 9.1 When considering equalities implications for the Council, as well as protected characteristics, we consider the higher levels of poverty experienced by some residents in this rural area due to high cost, poor quality housing stock, and the lower than average earnings. Increases in fees will impact on the ability of some residents to access services, particularly where fee increases are above inflation. Wages and benefits have not increased with inflation.

- 9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment [EIA] has been completed for the memorial bench policy change. Other EIAs will be completed as reports are prepared.

## **10. Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 There are no perceived climate change impacts of the changes to fees and charges recommended in the report.

## **11. Risk Management**

- 11.1 There is a risk that the proposed fee increases may result in customer complaints and higher levels of resistance than expected, leading to a shortfall in income against budget. It is hoped that this risk is mitigated by managers taking customer resistance into account when setting proposed fees. Therefore, this risk is assessed as low.

## **Report Authorisation**

Approvals obtained from:-

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	07/02/2023
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer (or Financial Services Manager)	Karen Henriksen	07/02/2023
Legal Services Manager	Kerry France	07/02/2023