



Report title: Discretionary Fees & Charges 2024/25

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 28th November 2023

Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate

Report of: Deputy Chief Finance Officer

Public or private: Public

Key Decision?: Y, is likely to lead to significant expenditure or savings within a service area, or one that is likely to have a significant impact on the life of a community within the Borough.

Published on the Forward Plan: Yes

1. Report summary

- 1.1 Discretionary Fees and Charges are reviewed on an annual basis. At Cabinet 25th July 2023 a 4% general increase in Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2024/25 was agreed for planning purposes, subject to exemptions to be agreed.
- 1.2 Inflation has remained high during 2023/24, putting additional pressure on Council running, and so the proposed increase in Discretionary Fees and Charges has been increased to 5%. This will generate additional income and bring the charges more in line with general inflationary increases.
- 1.3 The report details the proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2024/25 as a basis for consultation, and details those charges proposed to be exempt or different from the general 5% increase.
- 1.4 The report details the new proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2024/25 for consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the updated Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2024/25, as a basis for consultation.

- 2.2 Cabinet note that a 1% change to the Discretionary Fees & Charges would mean an increase or decrease of £40k. Any change to the % increase could be considered as part of the consultation.
- 2.3 Cabinet approves the charges exempt from the general 5% increase, as set out in paragraph 5.3.
- 2.4 Cabinet approve the different % increases, as set out in paragraph 5.4.
- 2.5 Cabinet approve the proposed new Discretionary Fees & Charges as set out in paragraph 5.5.

3. Reason for recommendation

- 3.1 The fees and charges in this report have been proposed by each Directorate, taking into account the 5% general uplift in Discretionary Fees and Charges.
- 3.2 It is recommended that no uplift is applied to the fees and charges detailed in paragraph 5.3.
- 3.3 It is recommended that the fees and charges in paragraph 5.4 are uplifted by the amounts stated.
- 3.4 It is recommended that the new fees and charges in paragraph 5.5 be approved for consultation.

4. Alternatives considered

- 4.1 The alternative is not to review or increase our fees and charges. This would potentially reduce the income available to the Council and make it more difficult to achieve a balanced budget.

5. Key information

- 5.1 The Authority carries out an annual review of discretionary fees and charges as part of the budget setting process. It is a requirement of this process that Cabinet agrees an appropriate general level of increase. For the 2024/25 financial year Cabinet 25th July 2023 approved a general increase of 4%, as a basis for consultation. The general increase is now proposed to be 5%, due to cost inflation remaining high.
- 5.2 In most cases charges have been rounded to the nearest pound. The amended proposed fee levels for the 2024/25 financial year, which take into account

rounding's, are included in Appendix 1. Where 5% is applied and the increase is less than 50p, there will not be an increase in the charge.

- 5.3 After consultation with Directorates, it is requested that the 5% increase not be applied to the following areas:

Taxi Licences – Taxi licensing must operate by law on a cost recovery basis. Rochdale is one of the highest charging authorities in GM, and in order to avoid any judicial reviews, want to keep charges the same for 2024/25. The fee setting work which is ongoing across GM has been delayed because the GM minimum licensing standards have been paused by some Local Authorities. Once the new fee structure has been developed, it will be considered by elected members via the necessary governance / committee process.

Street Trading – Rochdale Council's fees are amongst the highest in GM. If the fees were increased any higher then this could lead to challenge or a judicial review.

Car Boot Sales – Charges held in order to maintain usage levels.

Traffic Regulation Orders - Temporary Carnivals, fetes and similar events - Charges to non-profit / non-commercial organisations to be held at current level.

Car Parking – In previous financial years the income target for car parking has not been achieved. Increasing the charges is likely to bring further financial pressure to the service.

Liability Orders – In line with Government guidance, current charges cover the cost incurred. A further increase is not recommended.

Blue Badges - Government limit the maximum charge to £10 per badge issued and Rochdale is already charging this.

Town Hall Meeting Rooms – A separate Cabinet paper and business case will be presented to Members, which will set out the new charges for the re-opening of the Town Hall and therefore the charges have been removed from this report.

Adult Care Appointeeship Fee – The net cost of running the service has not increased so the fees and charges will remain at the current level.

- 5.4 After consultation with Directorates, it is requested that the following areas be increased by the percentages below:

Food Hygiene Charges – Charges have been amended to ensure consistency with other Greater Manchester authorities. A food rescore will increase by 7%, a food premises pre-inspection will increase by 15% and the food hygiene advisory hourly rate will increase by 17%.

Public Protection - Primary Authority Agreement has reduced from £105 to £95. This is to bring the charge in line with what other GM Authorities are charging and to compete with market rates.

Licensing - Ear Piercing, Tattooing and Acupuncture fees will increase by 12% in order to bring them in line with the charges across GM.

Bulky Waste – Costs will increase from £2.50 for additional Bulky Items to £8. This is a 220% increase and is to bring it in line with other GM Authorities.

Cremation Fees – Rochdale Council currently have the 3rd lowest fees and charges for Cremations across GM, therefore the cost will increase by 9% to bring this more in line with other GM Authorities.

Bereavement Charges – The service have recently done some benchmarking across GM and found Rochdale were one of the highest charging authorities. In order to remain in line with other GM Authorities the charges for bereavement can only be increased by 4%.

Local Land Charges – In order to keep the land charges in line with other GM Authorities the increase is proposed to remain at 4%.

Pest Control Fees – In order to keep the rates affordable for residents the proposal is to increase the pest control fees by 4%.

Allotments – The charging process for allotments has now changed. Instead of having one charge for all allotments, they will now be charged based on size. Charges will be tiered for small, medium and large plots. The original fee for all allotments was £50p per square metre. Small plots will be charged 50% more at £75p per square metre, medium plots will be charged 100% more at £1 per square metre and large plots will increase by 150% to £1.25 per square metre.

Adult Care - Deferred Payments Administration Fee has increased by 6.63% to cover the increase in the cost of providing the service.

Children's Services - Children's services are proposing to increase the charges for the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Awards by 12.5%, to fully recover the costs for this activity. The Music Service termly membership will increase by 10% for a family and 16.67% for an individual. The Music Festival entry charges will increase by 20% for an individual and 50% for larger groups in order to recover costs.

Library Fees - The charge to print on A3 coloured paper will increase from £1.20 to £1.50 which is a 25% increase. This is in order to bring this charge more in line with the charge for coloured A4 paper, which is £1 per print.

5.5 **New Discretionary Fees and Charges**

Memorials - New memorial options are now available at the recently developed West Lodge Memorial garden, where the public can have a glass leaf inscribed and installed on the Mulberry tree for a lease period of 5 years.

Fitness Clubs – There are an increasing number of small single person businesses operating fitness clubs of various types from parks within the Rochdale Borough. It is now considered appropriate to have more formal arrangements with a License to Occupy via Estates. This is to ensure there is a suitable agreement on how the businesses are allowed to operate. A benchmarking exercise was carried out which showed that other Councils charge for the hire of the land by these single person fitness businesses.

Pest Control Fees - A new fee of £25 will be introduced when a call out for insect treatment results in no infestation being found and no treatment being undertaken. The full fee for the insect treatment will be taken prior to the visit and a refund will be issued minus the £25 fee for the initial visit and trap laying.

6. **Finance**

6.1 A full list of all proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 is included in Appendix 1.

6.2 Taking into account the exceptions mentioned in 5.3, and other increases in 5.4 and 5.5, the proposal to increase charges in line with inflation is forecast to generate a further c. £200k contribution per annum towards running costs.

7. **Consultation**

7.1 All Directorates engage in the production of the proposed charges identified within this report. The Leadership Team, Cabinet Member for Finance, and the opposition Portfolio Holder for Finance have been informed of the proposed charges for 2024/25. The report will be submitted to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th December 2023.

8. **Human resource**

8.1 This report has no impact on Human Resources.

9. Sustainability impact

9.1 This report has no Impact on Sustainability.

10. Other considerations

10.1 Each Directorate has reviewed its charges against relevant legislation to ensure that all transactions remain compliant with the relevant statutes governing Local Authority activities.

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