

Report to Cabinet



Date of Meeting	25 th February 2021
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Corporate Delivery
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Public/Private Document	Public

Discretionary Fees & Charges

Executive Summary

- 1.1 Discretionary Fees and Charges are reviewed on an annual basis. At Cabinet 28th July a 2% general increase in Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2021/22 was agreed for planning purposes, subject to exemptions to be agreed.
- 1.2 Following Consultation this report details the proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2021/22 and details those charges proposed to be exempt from the general 2% increase.

Recommendation

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the updated Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2020/21, following consultation.
- 2.2 Cabinet approves the charges exempt from the general 2% increase, as set out in paragraph 4.3.
- 2.3 Cabinet approves the updated charge for Taxi Vehicles Annual fee, as detailed in paragraph 4.4.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 The fees and charges in this report have been proposed by each Directorate, taking into account the 2% general uplift in Discretionary Fees and Charges as agreed at Cabinet on 28th July 2020.
- 3.2 It is recommended not to apply a 2% increase to the fees and charges detailed in paragraph 4.4.

Key Points for Consideration

- 4.1 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 Elected Members agree an appropriate general level of increase. For the 2021/22 financial year, Cabinet on 28th July approved a general increase of 2%, as a basis for consultation.
- 4.2 In most cases charges have been rounded to the nearest pound. The amended proposed fee levels for the 2021/22 financial year, which take into account rounding are included at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 After consultation with Directorates , it is requested that the 2% increase not be applied to the following areas:

Car Parking – Budget Pressure funding has been provided to the service in previous financial years. Increasing the charges is likely to bring further financial pressure to the service.

Taxi Licences – There is a continuing legal challenge against Local Authorities for the level of charges and, based on an extensive benchmarking exercise, it is recommended that fees remain static to mitigate the legal challenge and any cost award. The future implementation of the GM minimum licensing standards will require a full review of the fee structure.

Land Charges – Based on Greater Manchester benchmarking, there is a risk that by increasing the cost of search fees this will create future budget pressures as the service will be outside of the market pricing.

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

Music Service Charges – Based on a benchmarking exercise, charges set to reflect competitive private tuition market and therefore maximise potential income streams.

Food Hygiene Charges – Charges amended to ensure consistency with Greater Manchester.

Careline/Support@Home – These Adult Care charges will be set based on actual costs and the number of service users in receipt of the service. This will be reported to Cabinet in a separate paper in February prior to Budget Council.

Town Hall Meeting Rooms – Due to closure of the Town Hall in 2020.

Bulky Waste Collection – Cabinet 25th August 2020 approved a reduction in charges in order to reduce fly tipping.

Sponsorship Signs – Budget already increased in line with previous savings proposal.

Bereavement Services – based on a benchmarking exercise carried out by The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), it is recommended that fees remain static to remain broadly in line with other GM Authorities.

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.

- 4.4 As part of the consultation and following Government announcements at the start of the pandemic surrounding amendments to MOT rules extending for an additional six months. Options were considered and it was concluded the best way forward was to allow taxi vehicle owners to get an MOT from any MOT testing centre.

The consequence of this is the annual licence fee for taxis is to be reduced by the cost of an MOT - £48.00.

The annual licence fee for taxis' was exempt from the general 2% uplift as set out in paragraph 4.3. Therefore, there is no change to the forecasted generated income of c £70k per annum which is based upon all charges excluding the exemptions as set out in paragraph 4.3.

4.5 **Alternatives Considered**

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.

Costs and Budget Summary

- 5.1 A full list of all proposed fees and charges for 2021/22 is included in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 Taking into account the exceptions mentioned in 4.3 and 4.4, the proposal to increase charges in line with inflation is forecast to generate c.£70k per annum, this being included within the provisional 21/22 budget.

Risk and Policy Implications

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

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 opposition Portfolio holder for Finance and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been informed of the proposed charges for 2021/22.

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
8. Not applicable	

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