

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Corporate Management Team

to
Cabinet

on
14 February 2017

Report prepared by: Ian Ambrose
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Fees & Charges 2017/18
All Scrutiny Committees
Executive Councillor: Councillor John Lamb
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1 Purpose of Report

To consider the detailed fees and charges for services in 2017/18 included in the budget proposals for 2017/18.

2 Recommendation

That the Cabinet recommend that the proposed fees & charges for each Department as contained within the body of this report and the appendices be approved by Council.

3 Background

3.1 Income from fees and charges are an important part of the Council's overall financial strategy and assist in the overall balancing of the budget. Clearly the scope to increase fees or charges is determined by a number of factors, of which the most important are: strategic desirability, government direction, elasticity of demand for services, and impact on service users. There is no prescribed increase in individual fees and charges, although the medium term financial strategy assumes a 2% increase in net income collected (yield) from general price increases. Some proposed savings are also predicated on discreet increases over and above the assumed 2% increase in yield or new charges, and have been included within the schedules.

3.2 Members are asked to note

3.2.1 Allotments – there is no increase in charge for 2017/18. However given the yearlong notice period required before any increase, the schedule proposes an increase for 2018/19.

- 3.2.2 Pier & Foreshore – there has been a rationalisation of foreshore charges, removing redundant charges.
 - 3.2.3 Regulatory – similarly redundant charges have been removed. The annual licensing fee for Tables and Chairs outside cafés and restaurants has also been removed.
 - 3.2.4 Bereavement Services – there has been a rationalisation of the fee structure for burials, and the introduction of new fees for new service offerings.
 - 3.2.5 Council Tax Penalties – a new set of statutory charges are proposed for the failure to provide certain information to the Council within 21 days of the change occurring.
 - 3.2.6 Corporate Venues – there has been a complete overhaul of the charging structure for hire of various meetings rooms at the Civic Centre and at Tickfield to allow for a more competitive and consistent offering. As a result any prior year comparative has been made redundant. Discretionary discounts may also be negotiated for regular, combination and / or multiple block booking.
 - 3.2.7 General – the schedules show both the proposed monetary and percentage increase for each charge. Where a new charge is proposed, this is flagged accordingly.
- 3.3 Car parking fees - there are no proposals to increase parking charges this year. However, as a result of representations received and the outcome of the Steer Davies Gleave study, the opportunity has been taken to reduce charges for long stay parking along the seafront and in the town centre. At the same time, it is expected that the review of the parking permits will also free up more spaces for visitors. This is expected to encourage visitors to spend more time at seafront and town centre, assisting local economy and reducing parking pressure during busy summer days/months. Other parking charges and permits proposals are:-
- 3.3.1 Introduction of charges along currently free bays along Ness Road (from opposite No 59 to 144/146). There will be residents' permits at a reduced price of £50 per annum.
 - 3.3.2 Annual permits along seafront car parks are withdrawn and replaced with "winter only weekday only" permits between 1 November to 31 March, to enable more capacity for visitors in the summer.
 - 3.3.3 It is proposed to Introduce limits for permits (percentages) based on the level of use of the car parks, encouraging more permits for the underused car parks and restricting the numbers at high demand / yield car parks.
 - 3.3.4 Recognising the needs of the Beach Hut owners, introduce new permits for them to park at nearby car parks and on-street bays.
 - 3.3.5 Introduce seasonal charges and permits at Shoebury Common and East Beach car parks to encourage greater use.
 - 3.3.6 Residents' permits fees for on-street parking in the town centre and sections of seafront are being reduced from £100 to £50 per annum.
 - 3.3.7 Introducing charging non-resident blue badge holder in car parks.
 - 3.3.8 Permit year will run from 1 April to 31 March.
 - 3.3.9 Introducing fixed £3 per day parking fee at the Civic Centre Complex and Beecroft at the weekend.

- 3.3.10 The seasonal summer and winter tariffs are maintained along central seafront and in response to representations received free parking after 6pm is also to continue.
- 3.3.11 The district car parks tariffs remain the same except for a reduction in the long stay parking charges and clarification that there will be free parking on Sundays and that a cap will be placed on the maximum number of permits. Furthermore, an opportunity has been taken to enable residents and businesses to buy parking permits through new flexible annual, quarterly and monthly permits.
- 3.3.12 With respect to the Town Centre car parks, Sunday charging times have been clarified to apply only from 11am to 5pm.
- 3.3.13 It is further proposed not to issue any permits for parking along the Central seafront area between Southchurch Avenue and Western Esplanade to enable greater capacity for visitors and permits in Seafront car parks will only be available during winter months (1 November to 31 March).
- 3.3.14 The charges for the existing special comprehensive, comprehensive, and all town centre car parks permits remain unchanged.
- 3.3.15 Introduce limited waiting restrictions (maximum 6 hours with prohibited return within 4 hours) at Priory Park, Chalkwell Park and Eastwood Park.

3.4 The Council is also commissioning a parking strategy which will undertake a fundamental review of the current parking provision, with the aim of maintaining the economic vitality of the town centre, future parking need and charges.

3.5 Where fees are subject to VAT, the rate of 20% has been incorporated into these proposals.

3.6 In addition some charges made by the Council are set by statute and therefore they are not at the discretion of the Council; these are clearly marked in the attached charges.

4 Proposals for 2017/18

4.1 Proposals for fees and charges for 2017/18 are set out in the Appendices to this report.

Appendix 1 – Department for People

Appendix 2 – Department for Place

Appendix 3 – Department of the Chief Executive

4.2 The proposed charges presented to Cabinet in January have been updated in light of the consultation with the Scrutiny Committees and the Business Sector.

5 Other Options

No other options were considered. This report merely brings together the proposals for fees and charges, be they statutory or discretionary.

6 Reasons for Recommendations

Part of the process of maintaining a balanced budget includes a requirement to consider the contribution that fees and charges make towards that aim. This report is in fulfilment of that requirement.

7 Corporate Implications

7.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Critical Priorities

The budget strategy is an integral part of the Council's Corporate Service and Resources Planning Framework.

7.2 Financial Implications

As set out in the body of the report. In addition the additional income yield has been factored into the proposed 2017/18 budget.

7.3 Legal Implications

None at this stage

7.4 People Implications

None at this stage

7.5 Property Implications

None at this stage

7.6 Consultation

The proposals contained in this report have been considered by the Scrutiny Committees and the Business Sector consultation meeting.

- Place Scrutiny Committee sought clarification and explanation about the majority of the draft fees and charges for 2017/18 in respect of their area of responsibility. In particular they requested that Cabinet reconsider the extension of car parking charges along Eastern Esplanade and Thorpe Esplanade;
- People Scrutiny Committee sought clarification about the forecast average unit cost of all home care per hour, but otherwise offered no comments on the draft fees and charges for 2017/18 in respect of their areas of responsibility;
- Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee sought clarification about a number of charges but otherwise offered no comments on the draft fees and charges for 2017/18 in respect of their areas of responsibility;
- The Business and Voluntary Sector Consultation meeting offered no comments on the draft fees and charges for 2017/18.

Wherever required public consultation will commence in time to ensure that the new fee structures can be in place for the start of the new financial year.

7.7 Equalities Impact Assessment

None at this stage

7.8 Risk Assessment

The key risks are:

Elasticity of demand for some services may mean that increases in fees & charges lead to a fall in income collected.

Some residents/service users may not be able to afford increases, so that the impact may fall disproportionately on those on low incomes.

Assumptions about increases for those items that are not set by the Council may not be correct.

7.9 Value for Money

In order to deliver value for money it is essential that the Council gets the right balance between charging for services and funding services from Council Tax.

7.10 Community Safety Implications

None at this stage

Environmental Impact

None at this stage

8 Background Papers

None

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Department for People

Appendix 2 – Department for Place

Appendix 3 – Department of the Chief Executive