

Changes to Fees and Charges other than 2%

For the majority of services there will be a 2% increase for 2013/14. There are instances where this is not practically possible and these are highlighted in the following paragraphs. The detail of the changes is set out below:

Social Care Health and Housing

Adult Social Care charges have been increased by 2% in line with the Council's budget strategy. It is usual practice to increase these charges in line with the DWP statutory increase in benefits and pensions. The inflation rate that is expected to be applied is 2.2% (based on CPI for September 2012) but this is subject to final confirmation by the government. If this is confirmed then the 2% proposals would stand. If not the charges can be reviewed again once the announcement is made.

As part of the Landlord Services' plans to develop an Outreach Service to non-tenants a new charge is proposed that will combine the provision of a Careline Emergency Response facility with one or more visits from a Sheltered Housing Officer per week.

In Learning Disabilities it is considered that the charge for Linsell House is no longer representative of the costs involved in providing the service. An initial evaluation is being conducted by the Head of Learning Disabilities and Mental Health and the Finance Manager to determine the level of disparity and to make recommendations for the level of increase which may differ from the 2% currently proposed.

In Mental Health services consideration over 2013/14 will be given to the advisability of implementing the charge for adult customers with mental health needs attending day centres provided by the NHS.

Children's Services

Music Services

Children's Services are recommending to hold prices for music services at the 2012/13 rate. The service was redesigned in 2011 to be a front end cost neutral provision.

Sustainable Communities

Key Changes include:

Public Protection

Licences:

Riding establishments – it is proposed to vary the cost of the licence based on the number of horses. This means that those who have the highest risk pay the most. The variances will better reflect the cost to the Council and reduce burden on businesses.

Dangerous wild animals and renewal of dangerous wild animals, Pet shops, Animal breeders and Animal Boarding Establishments – it is proposed to reduce the cost of the licence so that they better reflect the cost to the Council and reduce burden on businesses.

Animals Boarding and Breeding – where animal breeders and animal boarding are carried out on the same site, it is proposed to charge a reduced combined rate to reflect the reduced cost to the Council.

Animal Home Boarding – it is proposed to introduce a new charge due to an increase in the number of home run boarders.

Zoos – it is proposed to change the way this licence is charged for to better reflect the amount of officer time required.

Licensing of Hackney Cabs and Private Hire Vehicles – following consultation with the Licensing Committee and the trade, it is proposed to freeze the charges.

Acupuncturists – a new charge for acupuncturists already registered with a recognised professional body is proposed to be introduced due to the reduction in work required by the Council.

Development Management

High Hedges – it is proposed to increase the charge to better reflect the cost of the service including the need to run any potential appeals

Highways and Transport

Off street parking hourly charges, penalty charge notices and permits (except annual – see below) are proposed to be held at 2012/13 rates.

Parking permits – following requests from Members it is proposed to decrease the Residents permit per annum for the first permit..

Book 25 visitors day tickets – due to the low take up it is proposed to reduce this charge. It will also be offered in conjunction with the first permit to try and increase take up.

Replacement of concessionary travel permits and Travel Aid Scheme – it is proposed to increase these charges to better reflect the true cost and bring the Council in line with other Concessionary Fare Authorities.

Construction of Crossover – it is proposed to charge a 10% admin fee to cover the costs of administration

Rights of Way

Documents – it is proposed to add £2 for postage and packing for documents when a request is made to post then.

Libraries

Following benchmarking it is proposed to freeze the following library charges:

- CDs
- Videos
- Fines
- Lost and damaged items
- Requests (apart from Additional charge for books borrowed from outside Bedfordshire)
- Lost ticket replacement
- Colour CD-ROM and internet prints
- Colour photocopies
- UK faxes

Picture hanging service – it is proposed to delete this charging structure as it is not required (i.e. the service does not receive requests).

Display of commercial posters and Libraries sale items – it is proposed to delete this charging structure as it is not required (i.e. the service does not receive requests). More fundamentally, the service wants to use library wall space to create attractive displays for library events and activities and promote their own services in order to increase usage.

Charity and commercial group sales – it is proposed to delete this charging structure as it is not required (i.e. the service does not receive requests). It was originally set up when the library service used to receive requests from charities to operate charity Christmas card sales. This has not happened for many years.

Meeting Room Hire – it is proposed to harmonise the Leighton Buzzard Theatre meeting room hire charge, with the Leighton Buzzard (and Flitwick) Libraries' room hire charge.

Planning

Pre application advice - This has now been replaced by a new charging scheme due to user feedback. The future scheme will make a simpler charging regime and one which does not discourage larger developments.

Corporate Resources

The Registration Service is provided for Bedford Borough Council via a Service Level Agreement and both authorities must agree those fees which are set locally.

Fees for marriages and civil partnerships use at Local Authority premises have been held at 2012/13 levels.

Fees for Celebratory Ceremonies have been reduced as a consequence of a change of process which has reduced costs.

Local Land Charges are required by a statutory instrument to be non profit making and the current set fees are at an appropriate level to comply with this.

Charges for Freedom of Information (FOI) requests that require more than 18 hours to collate and extract information to complete are subject to the FOI Act Fees Regulations where the charge can be no more than £25 per hour.

The full revised schedule is shown at Appendix J(ii).