

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 & Housing

Housing

Service Charges (VAT n/a) - per week (48 week basis)

A service charge is a payment made by a tenant towards the cost of services and repairs beyond those specifically for their house or flat. For example, tenants in a block of flats with communal areas outside their flat are all charged a proportion of the costs that are incurred to clean and light this area.

A review has found that a small number of charges can be reduced, but a number - especially for heating, lighting and cleaning - should be increased to properly reflect the cost of providing these services. Fuel costs in particular have seen a significant increase in prices over the last few years.

In order to minimise the potential financial impact on tenants, but to ensure that the Council begins to recover the true cost of these items, it is proposed that any increase in service charges for 2014-15 will be limited to a maximum overall increase of £1.10 per week.

This protection is limited to existing tenants. The true cost however will be charged for all new tenancies, even those who are already Council tenants but are transferring to another Council property. (The increased charge will be included in the property advertisement on the Choice Based Lettings site.)

Guest Rooms

An increase for guest rooms in sheltered schemes is also proposed, from £9.50 (current) to £10 for single rooms and from £14.80 (current) to £15 for double rooms. This slight increase in charges will contribute to the additional service that is being introduced to ensure that guest rooms are properly cleaned between bookings.

Lifeline Emergency Response (VAT n/a) - per week (48 week basis) - new customers from 01.04.2014

Although existing clients will remain on the same contractual agreements and charging structure, a new pricing model and improved service is proposed for introduction for new clients as of April 2014.

Outreach Service – Lifeline + (VAT n/a)

Following a review of the interest in this service, and the time taken to complete the initial visits, it is proposed that Lifeline+ customers are charged as follows:

£6 per week for the Lifeline and 1 visit per week;
£8 per week for the Lifeline and 2 visits per week;
£10 per week for the Lifeline and 3 visits per week.
(Most clients are opting for 1 visit per week.)

Park Homes Charges (per pitch unless otherwise stated)

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 places new responsibilities on the Council but also allows recovery of some costs for Park Homes administration. The Council administers Site Licences for more than 80 Park Home sites.

Fees are proposed for the administration of Park Homes licences as enabled by the 2013 Act. Fees would be based upon service costs and will be published within a Fees Policy developed for 1 April 2014.

Private Sector Housing

Fees of 12% of the value of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) works are proposed, to be added to the DFG being provided to the client except in cases where addition of a fee will reduce the clients' ability to receive the full DFG for works that are necessary and appropriate.

Fees are proposed for the technical support work undertaken under the Renewal Policy programme, which includes Empty Homes Loan assistance. A fee of 10% of the value of the agreed works would be charged to the client's Loan or grant (minor cases).

A fee of £40 is proposed for a 24 hour (1 working day) response to a solicitors (or other party's) enquiry. The response will include a written confirmation of the charges

The UK Border Agency requires a report from a competent Officer that a property proposed as accommodation for someone looking to enter the UK meets the required standards. The Council is not obliged to provide these reports, which require a property survey, but it is proposed that Housing Services will undertake an immigration survey and provide a full report for a fee of £200. The survey and report will be provided by an Officer with suitable qualification and expertise in applying the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Residential Care (VAT n/a)

Uplift linked to Sept CPI 2.7% (closely linked to benefits uprating which affects many adult social care customers ability to pay). Many vary from 2.7% due to roundings.

Day Opportunities and Day Care (VAT n/a), Telecare Services, Telecare Monitoring Service, Meals: (VAT n/a), Day Centres, Lettings.

Uplift linked to CPI (2.7%) and rounded.

Domiciliary Care

Reflects updated average purchase price - year-on year reduction - previous average hourly cost reflected in-house service cost (now outsourced)

Social Care Services

Linsell House (Home for Adults with Multiple Disabilities) (per week)

Reflects full cost recovery

Community Services

Licensing

Following a freeze on increases for the last four years it is proposed that the fees and charges in relation to Private Hire / Hackney Carriages should be increased.

Following new legislation, new statutory fees have been introduced in relation to the Licensing Act and Licences for Scrap Metal Traders.

Pest Control

A new and simplified charging structure is proposed to be introduced for pest control. Rats, mice, bedbugs and cockroaches of £60 per infestation (£30 for concessions). Wasps, ants and fleas will be £68 per infestation (£34 for concessions). The first infestation will no longer be free.

Abandoned/End of life vehicles

A single charge is proposed to cover domestic and non-domestic premises and a new fee has been introduced for caravans.

Parking

It is proposed to continue to freeze parking charges. New fees have been set for the car park in Flitwick, once the Council takes full control of it in 2014. The charge will remain £5 per day Monday to Friday and introduce a £1 charge on Saturday and Sunday.

A new excess overnight charge for parking in multi storey car park and for any lost car park token is proposed to be introduced.

Libraries and Theatre

Internet access is proposed to be free for the first 2 hours and then charged at £1 per hour.

Following the refurbishment of the libraries and theatre it is proposed that room hire is based on the room size and its facilities.

The late vacating charge for Leighton Buzzard Theatre is now proposed to be based on the appropriate hourly rate rather than a fixed amount.

Regeneration and Business Support

Adult Skills Service

It is proposed to introduce room hire charges for Kingsland and Samuel Whitbread.

Improvement & Corporate Services

Registration (Fees jointly agreed with Bedford Borough Council (BBC) under a Service Level Agreement)

Following discussion with BBC and benchmarking with neighbouring districts, in most instances 3.5% has been applied to the fees set by LAs. These have been rounded to the nearest £5.00. Fees for marriages and civil partnerships in Local Authority Venues have, for historical reasons, been charged at less than cost recovery. For 2014/15 it is proposed that these fees be increased towards cost recovery and that a sliding scale be introduced to recognise the differing numbers of guests which can be accommodated at these venues.

Nationality Checking Service, Settlement Checking Service, Citizenship Ceremonies - Individual Ceremony (VAT n/a), Approved Premises Licence Fee (Three year) First application (minimum fee for 2 rooms only - £100 to be added for each additional room to be licenced), Approved Premises Licence Fee (Three year) Renewal (minimum fee for 2 rooms only - £100 to be added for each additional room to be licenced).

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Coroners

New fees introduced by legislation with effect from July 2013

Advertising in News Central

News Central advertising is now provided on behalf of the council by Immediate Solutions. To find out about advertising rates and availability call 01422 354300.

Legal Services

Proposed charges for 2014/15 are based on benchmarking