
Subject:	FEES AND CHARGES 2020/21
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 13 January 2020
Report of:	Mike Davis, Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Stephen Manion, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Decision Type:	Key
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: This report has been prepared in order to obtain formal approval for the levels of fees and charges (F&Cs) for the financial year 2020/21. These F&Cs have been included in the preparatory work on the draft budget for 2020/21 and require approval.

Recommendation:

1. Cabinet approve the Fees and Charges (F&Cs) for 2020/21 as set out in Appendices 2.1 to 2.9, and 5.1 and 5.3.¹
2. Members agree that any F&Cs will be adjusted by Strategic Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders, to comply with any subsequently received government guidelines (when they are received) and any other minor changes without being the subject of a further report unless they are materially different from current charges, or have a material impact on the level of income.
3. Members approve the general principle that fees are set at an appropriate inclusive level, irrespective of VAT status, and that the VAT element within the overall fee level is then determined.
4. Members note the fees and charges approved separately by Licensing and Regulatory Committees set out in Appendices 3 and 4.

1. Summary

The Council's constitution specifies that F&Cs shall be reviewed annually. In order to meet this requirement the Strategic Directors have been asked to review the F&Cs within their areas of responsibility (see checklist of issues to consider – Appendix 1) and to produce recommended levels for 2020/21. The fees and charges are tabulated in the further Appendices for consideration and/or approval by Members.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The level of Member approval required is dependent upon the types of F&Cs raised. In order to obtain appropriate approval the following reports have been prepared:

- Licensing Committee
Report to the meeting on 30 October 2019 of all F&Cs to be set by the Licensing Committee.
- Regulatory Committee

¹ Appendices 5.1 & 5.2 have been reviewed & noted by the Planning Committee.

Report to the meeting on 19 November 2019 of all F&Cs to be set by the Regulatory Committee.

- Planning Committee

Report (for information) to the meeting on 07 November 2019 of all F&Cs relevant to the Planning Committee.

- Cabinet

Report to the meeting on 13 January 2020 of all F&Cs, but seeking specific approval of those F&Cs set by Cabinet.

2.2 Members are reminded that a framework of broad guidelines to be considered in formulating proposals for F&Cs is in place. This includes a checklist which has been circulated to all Service Directors and to all officers considering F&Cs so that a rigorous and consistent approach is taken. A copy is attached at Appendix 1.

2.3 As in previous years, in order to assist Members, the data on F&Cs has been tabulated into a standard format that has been used for Appendices 2 to 5.

2.4 The main points to note are set out below.

Detail and Narrative

These give a brief summary of the type of service being provided.

Set by Government

This indicates whether a charge is statutory or not. If a charge is statutory then it is effectively set by Government and although formal Member approval is still sought, there is little or no scope to make changes.

2019/20 Charge Inc VAT

The charge has been provided inclusive of VAT for two reasons. First, it shows what the customer will actually pay and is therefore more meaningful.

Second, charges for some services, car parking for example, which are not simply a direct recovery of costs, are set at a level, inclusive of VAT, having regard to relevant considerations including market level, where appropriate. The VAT is therefore a deduction from the amount of charge retained by DDC and is not a key factor in determining the appropriate charge. Members are asked to approve this approach.

2020/21 Proposed Charge Inc VAT

This is the recommended charge for 2020/21 and the estimated income will, subject to Members' approval, be included in the 2020/21 budget.

2020/21 Total Expected Income ex VAT

This gives a broad indication as to how much income DDC is expected to receive and has been included to provide Members with a sense of the relative importance of individual charges or group of similar charges. The more significant income streams (generating over £3k) have been highlighted in **bold** type.

In some cases, the level of use is very low, or infrequent, or the service has only recently been introduced and so no level of income has been included.

Comments

This provides Members with a brief explanation for the change. In some instances guidance is still awaited from Government as to the basis upon which F&Cs should be set. In these cases it has not always been possible to confirm a fee level, Member's approval is sought to enable officers to adopt such fees at or close to government directed levels without a further report.

3. Children's Burial Fees

3.1 In April 2018 the Prime Minister announced that the costs of child burials and cremations are to be waived in England to bring them in line with Wales. Theresa May said the fees will be met by a new Children's Funeral Fund to help parents struggling to pay for funerals for children aged under 18. Technical guidance has now been published for Local Authorities with regards to this announced proposal. There is a plan for the fees to be scrapped in England by the end of July 2019. The announcement does not say that local authorities cannot set a fee, but they should not charge the family.

3.2 The current arrangement is that DDC charges for children's burials between the ages of 12 to 17, (an 18-year-old is an adult and would be charged accordingly). There is currently no burial fee for a child under the age of 12 here in Dover. The fees would still be shown on the council's fees and charges, but the cost would be recovered from the Children's Funeral Fund and not the family. The burial/cremating authority, funeral directors and the family can claim from this fund but only one claim can be made per burial. This would align with neighbouring authorities and the proposed direction of travel as set out by central government

3.3 The fees and charges would remain unchanged, but an officer would now need to complete a claims form on each occasion to recover the costs. Thankfully the number of occasions DDC would need to claim is very low and could be absorbed by the current resource dealing with burials. There would be no impact on the budget as the costs would be recovered.

4. Other Fees and Charges

4.1 The following F&Cs are not included in this report.

Housing Rents and Service Charges

Housing rents are approved by the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) under delegated authority. They are largely prescribed by government and the Council has no real scope to determine rent levels.

Service charges (for both tenants and long term lease holders) are determined through statutorily prescribed consultation processes and the recovery of all allowable costs. As a result the Council has no real scope to determine service charges.

4.1 Car Parking

Car parking fees are the subject of specific reports from the Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)

5 Identification of Options

5.1 The recommended figures for consideration by Members are included in the Appendices. Members may approve these proposed figures.

5.2 Members may propose and approve alternative figures with reasons recorded for their decisions.

5.3 Those fees already approved by Licensing and Regulatory Committees are for information only.

6 Evaluation of Options

- 6.1 The recommended fees and charges take into account the need to maximise income at a time of challenging budget positions, while taking into account comparable charges at neighbouring authorities and what the market can bear.
- 6.2 Members should also take into account the checklist of issues to consider (at Appendix 1) when reviewing the fees and charges included in the subsequent Appendices

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 See Appendices

8 Corporate Implications

- 8.1 Comment from the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources), linked to the MTFP: Finance have been involved in the production of this report and have nothing further to add (JS)
- 8.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 8.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>.

9 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – F&C checklist
- Appendices 2.1 – 2.9 – F&C for which Cabinet approval is sought
- Appendix 3 – F&C to be approved by Licensing Committee
- Appendices 4.1 -4.2 – F&C to be approved by Regulatory Committee
- Appendices 5.1 – 5.3 – Planning application fees

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