

Equality Impact Assessment – Fees & Charges changes

Background Information

Service area:	Discretionary Fees & charges relating to all service areas, except Childrens Services
Directorate:	See above
Proposal:	Non-statutory Fees & Charges
Completed by: Adrian Neighbour Date: 20/11/23	Approved by: Becky Hatch Date: 21/11/23

Provide a brief explanation of the budget proposal/s:

- What are the intended outcomes?
- Who will be affected by the proposal?
- Does this conflict with any statutory responsibilities or requirements?

The early adoption of increases in non-statutory fees and charges (F&C's) within the remaining financial year 2023/24 (from: 1/1/2024) & full financial year 2024/25 is intended to increase the income available to the Council, to help ameliorate financial pressures. The low council tax payable by residents in the Royal Borough means that income from residents is limited and this approach will increase the council's income and help to reduce the budget gap.

The list of proposed fees and charges which will be increased is wide ranging and is not displayed in full here. Most of these proposals reflect changes to existing fees and charges; a smaller number are new fees and charges to services or facilities that were previously free.

This impact assessment relates to fees and charges planned by all council services, except for Children's Services. Any increase in fees and charges will have a greater impact on those who have fewer financial resources, and those who use the specific affected services. A full list of all proposed increases to fees and charges are set out within Appendices A & B of the accompanying Fees and Charges Cabinet Report.

A summary of the selected fees and charges which are likely to have particular equality impacts can be found below.

Adults

Residential placement charges

Respite provision for people with learning disabilities

Day centre and day activities fees

Transport for people with learning disabilities and older adults

Place

Parking charges

Allotment fees

Resources

Library computer fees

Bus pass replacement

The proposed changes in relation to parking fees and charges are due to go out to public consultation in December 2023, for implementation in February 2024, following consideration of consultation feedback. Public consultations are not planned for the other proposed fees and charges increases, although engagement will take place with service users, as appropriate.

Equality Impact Analysis

	How do the protected characteristics influence the needs of individuals within this proposal? How might these characteristics affect the impact of the proposal? (If no influence on impact, state 'N/A')	Potential positive impact (Tick where relevant)	Potential negative impact (Tick where relevant)
Age	A number of the proposed increases will impact upon services aimed specifically at older people, particularly the increases to charges associated with Adult Services such as residential care, Meals on Wheels, etc. Increases to fees and charges may result in older people and their carers reducing their use of certain services..		✓
Disability	A number of the proposed increases will impact upon services aimed specifically at people with disability and their carers, particularly the increases to charges associated with Adult Services such as day centres, transport, and respite provision. Increases to fees and charges may result in disabled people and their carers reducing their use of certain services.		✓
Sex	Fees and charges increases will impact all sections of the population, but are not expected to disproportionately affect people on the basis of sex.		✓
Race, Ethnicity and Religion/Belief	Fees and charges increases will impact all sections of the population, but are not expected to disproportionately affect people		

	on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion/belief.		
Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment	Fees and charges increases will impact all sections of the population, but are not expected to disproportionately affect people on the basis of sexual orientation or gender reassignment.		
Pregnancy and Maternity	Fees and charges increases will impact all sections of the population, but are not expected to disproportionately affect people on the basis of pregnancy and maternity.		
Care experience (children in care and care leavers)	Children's Services are not affected by these proposals. Fees and charges increases will impact all sections of the population, but are not expected to disproportionately affect people on the basis of care experience.		
Socio-economic disadvantage (e.g. low income, poverty)	Residents on low income and experiencing socio-economic disadvantage will be more affected by increases in fees and charges than the rest of the population due to their reduced financial resources. Some charges may also disproportionately affect those on lower incomes, such as charges for the use of library computer which are more likely to impact those who do not have access to a computer at home.		✓
Marriage and Civil Partnership (in respect of employment discrimination only)	Fees and charges increases will impact all sections of the population, but are not expected to disproportionately affect people on the basis of marriage and civil partnership		
Armed Forces Community (in respect of access to public services)	Fees and charges increases will impact all sections of the population, but are not expected to disproportionately affect people on the basis of their membership of the Armed Forces community		

Where a potential negative impact has been identified, what measures would be put in place to mitigate or minimise it?

- Increases in Adult Service Transport costs for the elderly and the disabled are to be kept at the rate of inflation. The service will engage with service users to communicate the changes.
- Adult Service Homecare charges are to be set at 'cost' or below the rate of inflation. The service will engage with service users to communicate the changes.
- Adult Service care meals-on-wheels service are to be set at below the rate of inflation. The service will engage with service users to communicate the changes.
- The council will engage with service users of adults services who pay per session to communicate the fees increase.
- F&C's relating to Deputyships & Winding-up of Estates are to be set below the rate of inflation.

- Tapered charging structure relating to 1st Resident/Visitor/Waiver permits, together with 24hrs visitor permits serve to help single/lower income households with single car ownership.
- Parking charges in the two main town centre shopping car parks (Hines Meadow and Victoria Street) are proposed to be frozen for the first three hours of parking, and the one hour free resident parking offer will be retained.
- Non-discretionary F&C's relating to the Blue Badge Scheme are to be frozen.
- Charges on use of computers in libraries are to be frozen, and retaining 45 minutes free for Advantage Card holders to avoid negative impacts on those without computer access at home.
- Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies in Licenced Venues are to be set below the rate of inflation.
- F&C's relating to the replacement of bus passes are to be kept at the rate of inflation.