

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCILTRANSPORT COMMITTEE – 1ST FEBRUARY 2023EXECUTIVE – 13TH FEBRUARY 2023Report by the Director of Environment and Community Services on the Revision of Charges for 2023.SUMMARY

This report reviews the charges for recommendation to Executive in February 2023 and proposes that revised charges are brought into effect from 01 April 2023, with the exception of Parking Charges which will be effective from June 2023.

Charges are reviewed in line with the Council's charging policy which is to maximise charges for specific services to minimise any indirect subsidy from the Council taxpayer, seeking wherever possible to recover the cost of the service provision as a minimum. The charges have been reviewed taking account of current market conditions, as well as the wider cost of living crisis.

In order to mitigate the impact of fee increases to service users where possible whilst recovering the Council's increased costs, the Council's approach is to increase charges by 7% as a balance between increased inflationary driven costs and the impact on users, although with flexibility to derogate from this for specific circumstances.

It is estimated that -£920,000 net additional income will accrue to the General Fund in 2023/24 and -£1.055m for a full year as a result of these proposals.

GLOSSARY

CPI	Consumer Prices Index
EIA	Equalities Impact Assessment
PPA	Planning Performance Agreement
RPI	Retail Prices Index
VAT	Value Added Tax

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Transport Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 3.
2. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or make recommendations on the report, these will be reported to the Executive for its consideration.
3. The Executive is recommended to:
 - (a) approve the revised level of charges as set out in Appendices A to E to this report.
 - (b) apply the increases from 01 April 2023, with the exception of Parking Charges which would apply from June 2023.
 - (c) approve a negative General Fund revenue budget variation of -£920,000 in 2023/24 and -£1.055m in 2024/25 and a full year

INTRODUCTION

4. Inflation has been on the rise since August 2021 and is currently at historically high levels – the Consumer Price Index (CPI) dropped from a 41 year high of 11.1% in October 2022 to 10.7% in November. The Council's costs have increased significantly over that time, with no corresponding increase in Government support to fund it, and inevitably there needs to be an increase in charges for services where appropriate. However, the Council recognises the current cost of living crisis means some may be struggling to pay higher charges. In order to protect service users from increases as much as possible whilst reflecting inflation on its costs, the proposed approach is to apply increases of 7% whilst freezing concession charges.

SCOPE OF THE CHARGES REVIEW

5. The revised charges recommended in this report are in respect of:

Appendix A - Building Control
Appendix B - Planning and Development Management
Appendix C - Parking
Appendix D - Traffic & Engineering
Appendix E – CCTV

PROPOSED CHANGES

Building Control – Appendix A

6. The proposed Building Regulation fees are shown in Appendix A and are to be effective from 01 April 2023. All Building Control fees are proposed to be uplifted by 7%.

7. For all projects, the charge will vary depending upon the outcome of a risk assessment for the specific project. This can include consideration of the complexity of the proposed work, the amount of specialist input required and the number of anticipated site inspections.

Planning and Development Management – Appendix B

8. The proposed charges for pre-application advice, design panel review and ad-hoc charges are set out in Appendix B and are to be effective from 01 April 2023. All fees are proposed to increase by 7%. Fees associated with formal application for planning permission are set nationally and have not changed since 2018.

Parking – Appendix C

9. The Traffic Management Act 2004 gave local traffic authorities powers and a duty to keep roads clear and traffic moving. The Council's own policies on sustainable transport, air quality and traffic management seek to create an environment to encourage modal shift and less of a reliance on the car.
10. Parking charges and restrictions are generally targeted towards creating safe travel and transport environments, ensuring the appropriate balance of users and minimising the negative environmental impacts of localised parking and movement stress. The Council is also keen to improve local air quality and promote the use of sustainable forms of travel as far as possible.
11. Parking charges were last reviewed in June 2021 and resulted in new parking charges being introduced with effect from 1st October 2021.
12. The current review has taken into consideration the increase in costs associated with operating the parking service, since the last review in June 2021 as the need for car users to contribute an appropriate amount for the impact of car use in the borough. There is also an essential need to ensure the regular turnover of vehicles in places where there is high demand.
13. The charges for resident and business permits, on street parking and suspensions are proposed to increase by 7% and will be effective from June 2023.
14. To support the initial establishment and rollout of more environmentally friendly vehicles for electric, hybrid and other low emission vehicles, the Council offered Wandsworth residents a subsidy to the cost of residential permits for vehicles with CO2 emissions of <100g/km known as the 'Greener' permit. Included within this category are a significant number of hybrid and electric vehicles as well as a variety of low emission petrol and diesel vehicles. Greener vehicles are eligible for a 45-50% discount for parking permits.
15. This review has sought to ensure that this subsidy remains appropriate, taking into consideration the growing take up of low emission vehicles, the beneficiaries of this subsidy, as well as the negative impacts that even low emission vehicles have upon the Borough.

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16. The number of cars registered in the Borough that qualify for this discount is rapidly increasing in line with the increasing purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles and general improvements in petrol and diesel compliance with stricter emission standards. The number of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles registered in the Borough increased by 56% from June 2021 to June 2022, with the number of residential permits issued for Greener Permits increasing by 30% from November 2021 to November 2022 to represent 6% of overall residential permits in issuance.
17. Whilst the subsidy provides an incentive to encourage the uptake of low emission vehicles to support climate change air quality measures; it is weighted in its application toward road users with newer vehicles. The Greener permit provides a subsidy to car users, many with more costly new electric or hybrid vehicles at the expense of other road users who may be less financially secure in a time of cost of living crisis.
18. The Council is still committed to supporting the rollout of electric and ultra-low emission vehicles and is continuing to deliver an ambitious scheme for new electric vehicle car charging points.
19. It is proposed to retain the Greener permit but reduce the subsidy offered from 45-50% to 20% from the full permit price.
20. There are a range of concession discounts offered for parking permits in the Borough. These currently include
 - a) A discount of between 40%-50% for resident visitor permits for residents aged 70 or over and eligible disability badge holders
 - b) Ten free scratch cards for each resident
 - c) Free parking on housing estates for estates residents.
21. As part of the fee review it is proposed that the above concession discounts are to remain frozen to support those who are more vulnerable with the cost of living pressures.
22. All parking fee changes will become effective from June 2023.

Traffic and Engineering – Appendix D

23. Other Traffic and Engineering fees related to delivery of crossovers and damage to street furniture are proposed to increase by 7% to reflect the inflation experienced within infrastructure and civil engineering services and costs. Other highway charges have generally been reviewed in line with costs. These are set out in Appendix D and will be effective from 01 April 2023.

CCTV – Appendix E

24. The Retail Radio scheme provides a communication link between individual shop keepers in the Town Centres and the Council's CCTV control room. The radios are provided by the Housing Directorate's CCTV Control Room to the retailers who pay a

rental charge which is set to recover the costs. The proposed charge for 2023/24 is an increase of 7% on 2022/23 fees.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

25. It is estimated that £1.055m net additional income will accrue to the General Fund per year as a result of these proposals and therefore a negative General Fund revenue budget variation of -£920,000 in 2023/24 and -£1.055m in 2024/25 and a full year is requested.

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PAUL CHADWICK
Director of Environment and Community Services

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the Committee Secretary (Michael Flowers, 020 8891 7275; email michael.flowers@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk) can supply it if required.