

Full Council

Date: 20 February 2024

Title: Schedule of Charges 2024/25

Purpose of Report

To consider and approve the Schedule of Charges 2024/25.

Recommendation:

Members resolve to approve the proposed Schedule of Charges outlined in **Appendix 13B** including any variations proposed at this meeting.

Background:

1. There is a requirement for all councils to agree a Schedule of Charges ahead of each new financial year.
2. In February 2023, Town Council approved the Schedule of Charges for 2023/24 and these are shown on **Appendix 13A**:

2022-0225-TC Schedule of Charges Policy 2023/2024

- a) Members **RESOLVED** by 11 votes for to approve the Schedule of Charges agreed by the Open Spaces committee on the 7 February 2023
Proposer Cllr Tinson Seconded Cllr Osborne
3. During the financial year 2023-24 the Office for National Statistics recorded a Consumer Price Index increase of **6.7%** for the 12-month period ending 30 September 2023. It is worth noting that the Retail Price Index at the end of September 2023 was **8.9%**. This figure tends to be used in contractual arrangements.
4. Two elements of the draft Schedule of Charges 2024/25 were taken to the Recreation Ground Users Group meeting held on 30th January 2024. The fees for using the open spaces, and the pitch fees. The group agreed to recommend to the Open Spaces Committee of adding a time element of 'up to 4 hours' for the use of open spaces, and changing the inflation rate from 10% to 5% on the pitch fees.

Report:

5. At the Open Spaces Meeting held on 6 February 2024, the committee resolved to recommend to Full Council that all fees should be increased by the difference between the CPI rate and the RPI rate as of September 2023, which is calculated to be **7.8%**.
6. The recalculation of pitch fees is shown on **Appendix 13C**. These figures are included in the draft Schedule of Charges 2024/25 at **Appendix 13B**, and where appropriate, any increases have been rounded up or down to the nearest pound.

7. The photocopying fees would include the actual cost plus a nominal amount for administration (staff time, electricity and paper) costs.
8. Room hire at North Street is no longer relevant as the Town Council are vacating the building on 31st March 2024.
9. The last change in Market Fees was agreed at Town Council at their meeting held on 21 February 2017 (Minute No. 185A) with a start date of 1 April 2017. Despite this it is proposed to Members that there not be an increase in fees for the forthcoming year. We have seen an increasing amount of interest in the market and this has included some vendors wishing to use the Market House on days other than Thursday.
10. In the past, the Town Council has also allowed Market Traders to operate for no fees for a set period during the months of January to March which was called 'kipper week'. Members may wish to consider setting a period of no fees for some point between January to March 2025. This week could be used not only to thank the existing stall holders but also used to try and attract new ones.
11. A fair usually visits Ilminster twice a year around July and October. The current fee is £500.00 per visit, which includes the use of water and electricity, and a £500.00 deposit charged, and Members may choose to continue with this rate for the next financial year.
12. The Human Circus fee of £150.00 (£50.00 per day) with a £500.00 deposit and Members resolved to continue at this rate for the current financial year. The organisers of this have indicated they are unlikely to attend this year but would like to make a final decision later in the year. A suggestion has been made that a small charge of £10 per caravan be made.
13. It is proposed that any market or retail fairs be charged at the same rates as apply to the Market House and if there are any events that require access to utilities this would be considered on a case by case basis.
14. Members have already agreed that the tennis courts remain free of use to the community. Members may agree to the £10.00 charge for commercial businesses operating on the tennis courts.
15. As identified last year, officers receive requests for the use of the Town Council's open spaces. As a result of the debate that took place in 2022, delegated authority was given to Officers to manage the day-to-day operation of the council's services, buildings, land and all other assets for which the council has responsibility, in line with the budgets and policies approved by Members. This is to include the overseeing of all events and activities that take place on the council land.
16. As a result of this delegation, officers have, on a number of occasions, informed Members of requests to use council property in order to seek their opinions. A decision has then been made taking these opinions into account. This has led

to a more efficient method of operating and has increased the reputation of the council. It is recommended to add a time limit of 4 hours to those fees.

17. With regards to cemetery charges, it is proposed that the charges be increased by **7.8%** and then rounded up or down to the nearest pound. Officers have looked at charges in the surrounding area and Ilminster Town Council's compare favourably to them.
18. Any further decisions that were made in the course of a debate will be applied to the finalised Schedule of Charges.
19. If Members have any questions regarding any of the fees, please contact the office prior to the meeting to avoid any repetition of questions from previous meetings.
20. Members resolve to approve the proposed Schedule of Charges 2024/25 as outlined in **Appendix 13B** including any variations proposed at this Full Council meeting.

Julie Earp
Deputy Town Clerk
February 2024