

Committee: Open Spaces

Date: 7 February 2023

Title: Schedule of charges

Purpose of Report

To consider and recommend the Schedule of Charges to Full Council including football and cricket club fees proposed in Agenda Item 8

Recommendation:

Members resolve to recommend to Full Council the proposed schedule of charges outlined in Appendix 9B including any variations proposed at the meeting.

Background:

1. Prior to the January 2022 Open Spaces Committee meeting the Schedule of Charges had not been reviewed for a number of years. This is a requirement for all councils to do so ahead of the new financial year.
2. It is intended that this process will form part of the members day in 2023 in order to assist with the Budget setting process for the 2024-25 financial year.
3. The fees that the council resolved to be charged for the financial year 2023-24 are shown on Appendix 11A.
4. During the budget setting process for the financial year 2023-24 members were made aware that The Office for National Statistics gave a [Consumer Price Index increase](#) of **10.1%** for the 12 month period ending 30 September 2022, compared with **9.9%** for the previous month and a **4.2%** increase in September 2021. It is worth noting that the Retail Price Index at the end of September 2022 was **12.6%**. This figure tends to be used in contractual arrangements.
5. As a result of this a precept for the year was set that reflected this increase but which also took into account the difficulties that the community as a whole were facing in the cost-of-living crisis. The actual precept increase was **4.98%** as a result of which officers have looked to propose increases that approximate to this increase. Where appropriate any increases have been rounded up or down to the nearest pound.

Report:

6. Members have debated the pitch fees under agenda Item 8 and any decisions that were made in the course of the debate will be applied to the finalised Schedule of Charges a draft of which has been included as **Appendix 9B**.
7. The photocopying fees would include the actual cost plus a nominal amount for administration (staff time, electricity and paper) costs.
8. When looking at room hire it was clear that access to North Street may not be for much longer. However whilst it is available it was felt that the with the increase in utilities for the building there needed to be some consideration given to how various groups use it.
9. It was felt that a **£2-00** increase should be proposed as the cost of the utilities has increased dramatically over the past twelve months and this whilst not fully covering any increases would at least make a contribution. Members will also note that we have suggested that where charitable and other similar groups have had free use in the past, if they needed it for more than an hour it would be appropriate for some charge to be levied.
10. 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.
11. In the past, the Town Council has also allowed Market Traders to operate for no fee 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 2023. This week could be used not only to thank the existing stall holders but to also be used to try and attract new ones.
12. A fair usually visits Ilminster twice a year around June 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 resolved to continue at this rate for the current financial year.
13. 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.

14. 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.
15. Members have recently agreed in principle to the Tennis Courts to be refurbished and that they should remain free of use to the community. Members may wish to consider a charge for commercial businesses operating on the tennis courts in which case this can be added to the Schedule before it goes to Full Council. Information on this may be gathered through the proposed use of gate technology under the refurbishment plans.
16. As identified last year officers receive requests for the use of the open spaces on the recreation ground, Britten's Field, Winterhay play area and West Crescent. These requests have come from both community groups as well as commercial businesses. As a result of the debate that took place last year 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's land.
17. 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.
18. With regards to Cemetery charges it is proposed that the charges be increased around 5% and then rounded up or down to the nearest pound. The administration officers have looked at charges in the surrounding area and Ilminster Town Councils compare favourably to those.
19. Members resolve to recommend to Full Council the proposed schedule of charges outlined in Appendix 9a including any variations proposed at the meeting.

**Mark Tredwin
Town Clerk
February 2023**