

**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL
DECISION**

**DECISION OF: DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES
WITH ADVICE FROM: HEAD OF STRATEGY AND HOUSING
DIRECTORATE: PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**



DECISION NO: PC96 (2019-20 SCHEME)

SUBJECT: Fees and Charges Uplift 2020/21 – Strategic Housing and Music Services

KEY DECISION: YES

REASON: Impact on communities in multiple wards

BACKGROUND:

Fees and charges represent an important source of income, providing finance to assist in achieving the Council's broad objectives. Some of our fees and charges are effectively set by legislation but many are locally determined.

Income derived from charging will be used to offset the costs of providing the service being charged for, including support service costs. In setting an appropriate level of fees and charges, managers also take into account their client groups and corporate objectives.

A corporate increase of 1.25% has been applied across People and Communities income. The proposed increases in fees and charges detailed in this report are necessary to meet increased costs and budgetary pressures to which the Council is subject and will ensure that the contribution made by fees and charges to the Council's overall income budget is maintained. Full details of the proposed fees and charges for 2020-21 are set out at Appendix 1 and a summary is provided below.

The new charges have been set in accordance with the revised principles and guidance in relation to the setting of fees and charges approved by the Executive in February 2016.

Directors are empowered to make decision to increase fees and charges up to and including increases of 5%.

There are separate decisions in relation to gypsy and traveller site licences, and mobile home licensing.

DECISION:

To agree the 2020/21 fees and charges as set out in the report and in Appendix 1.

DETAILS AND REASONS:

Housing Services

Housing services are proposing to revise fees across a number of services. The proposed percentage fee increases are summarised in the table below and full details are in Appendix 1.

Service Area	Proposed Increase %
HMO Licencing	1.2% - 1.3%
Gypsy & Caravan site liaison (further advice)	1.3%
Non-Statutory Inspection Fees	1.3%
Other Housing Related services	1.3% - 1.8%
Home choice	1.3% - 1.4%
Enabling	0% (set sub-regionally)
Sheltered Leasehold	1.3%

Primary Authority

Under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 we have formally been nominated and accepted as the primary authority for assured advice in relation to residential caravan parks (i.e. site licence conditions); provided to the British Holiday and Park Home Association. This service is re-charged at an hourly rate with an annual review provision.

Mobile Home Sites

The Fee Policy for Protected Sites will be amended to reflect the revised fees and in line with the legislation (Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960) and will be the subject of a further decision.

Rental fees for gypsy and traveller sites

These are increased annually by RPI as at October of the previous year. A notice period of 28 days must be given to tenants before charges come into effect. A separate Director decision (PC87 (2019-20 Scheme)) approved the annual increases.

Music Services (increases to apply from September 2020)

Musical Instrument Hire

Instrument Hire charges fall into five categories depending upon the purchase cost and ongoing maintenance of particular instruments. To encourage young people to learn instruments the hire fee is kept low to minimise the barrier of instrument costs. As the stock of instruments ages and suffers increasing wear and tear, we do need to generate more income to cover maintenance and repair costs to keep the instruments usable and in circulation.

North Somerset Centre for Young Musicians Membership Fees

Fees for ensemble membership are kept as low as possible to ensure accessibility. The increase in rates offset increased teacher and venue costs.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The proposed fee increases described above are necessary to ensure that current levels of services are maintained. The alternative would be to cut services. Fee increases are undertaken only after due process and deliberations at Management and Executive levels. As part of this process all options are considered and discussed. The changes are considered appropriate to reflect increasing costs / cost recovery.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Medium Term Financial Plan includes an increase in budgeted income for 2020/21 of 1.25% across the People and Communities Directorate of £258k, the majority of which relates to Adult Care, and these proposed uplifts are included in a separate decision. The proposed revision of fees and charges is designed to meet this income target. There are risks associated with the revised fees where those service users who are impacted are the most vulnerable in community. Unrecoverable non-payment could increase the levels of debts held by the Council.

LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

Various legal powers allow the Council to make a charge for certain services. Charging decisions are fettered by a complex series of statutes and regulations. Services fall into five main categories for charging purposes. These categories are set out in the table below.

Category	Examples
No charge permitted	Service assessment for community care
Charges or charging scheme set by government – little or no local input	Client contributions for social services residential provision
Charging scheme set locally but must be in accordance with government prescribed principles	Client contributions for social services non-residential provision
Charge set locally, but essentially income cannot exceed the cost of providing a service	Charge for a discretionary service with no other charging rules Charge for a service provided using the general power of competence

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

CONSULTATION

A general uplift of 1.25% on the council's income budgets has been reflected as a savings proposal within the medium term financial plan since January 2020 and, as such, has been subject to review, scrutiny and consultation by a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. The uplifts contained here are consistent with the Council's fees and charges policy.

RISK MANAGEMENT

There are risks associated with the revised fees where service users who are impacted are the most vulnerable in community. Unrecoverable non-payment would increase the levels of debts held by the Council.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes / No
Over-arching EIA included within MTFP budget report. Because of the extent of the increases (none more than 5%), no material disproportionate impacts have been identified.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

No, other than those identified above.

APPENDICES

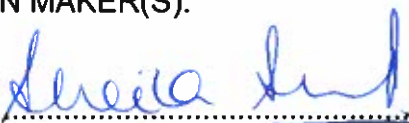
Appendix 1 – Proposed Changes to Fees and Charges.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Planning reports - Executive January and February 2020.
Fees and Charges Policy – Executive February 2016.

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed: 

Title: Director of People and Communities

Date: 25.2.20

IN CONSULTATION WITH:

Signed: 

Title: Head of Strategy and Housing

Date: 24/2/20

Footnote: Details of changes made and agreed by the decision taker since publication of the proposed (pre-signed) decision notice, if applicable:

APPENDIX 1 – Proposed Fees and Charges 2020/21

	2019/20	2020/21 proposed	Increase
<u>Housing</u>			
<u>HMO Licensing - Mandatory</u>			
Properties containing up to 5 units of accommodation	£690.00	£698.65	1.3%
Plus additional fee for each unit thereafter	£62.15	£62.95	1.3%
Fit & Proper Persons Assessment (per person)	£41.25	£41.80	1.3%
Cost recovery (per hr) when licensing works not completed (incl. third and subsequent visits)	£45.65	£46.25	1.3%
<u>HMO Licensing - Mandatory (Discounted)</u>			
Properties containing up to 5 units of accommodation	£550.00	£556.90	1.3%
Plus additional fee for each unit thereafter	£50.00	£50.65	1.3%
Fit & Proper Persons Assessment (per person)	£41.25	£41.75	1.2%
Cost recovery (per hr) when licensing works not completed (incl. third and subsequent visits)	£45.65	£46.25	1.3%
<u>Gypsy & Caravan Site Liaison Services</u>			
Attending unauthorised encampment on private land (initial visit)	Free	Free	
Attending unauthorised encampment on private land (subsequent visit, per hour)	£45.65	£46.25	1.3%
Further advice on unauthorised encampment on private land (per hour)	£45.65	£46.25	1.3%
<u>Non-Statutory Inspection Fees</u>			
Immigration inspection fee (plus disbursements), plus VAT	£79.05	£80.05	1.3%
Immigration inspection fee (plus disbursements), including VAT	£94.86	£96.06	1.3%
<u>Other Housing Related Fees</u>			
Recovery of expenses in taking enforcement actions including Housing Act 2004 (per hour)	£45.65	£46.25	1.3%
Primary Authority Fee (per hour by agreement)	£56.00	£57.00	1.8%
Supplementary information following local searches (per enquiry)	£38.60	£39.10	1.3%

	2019/20	2020/21 proposed	Increase
Choice Based Lettings			
Fee per letting from Registered Providers (RPs)	£53.60	£54.30	1.3%
Multiple letting fee (for each unit in addition to the first charged at the rate above)	£10.65	£10.80	1.4%
<i>Annual fixed charge – an annual fixed charge in relation to the HomeChoice service is payable by Registered Housing Providers (RPs) using the service and varying between RPs according to service utilisation by RP tenants. The total annual charge will increase by 1.25%.</i>			
Enabling			
Fee per unit from housing providers (set sub-regionally)	£550.00	£550.00	0.0%
Sheltered Leasehold			
Weekly management fee per leasehold unit	£47.75	£48.35	1.3%
<u>Music Service (changes to apply from 1 September 2020)</u>			
Musical Instrument Hire Category 1 (4 months)	£16.80	£17.50	4.2%
Musical Instrument Hire Category 2 (4 months)	£24.15	£25.00	3.5%
Musical Instrument Hire Category 3 (4 months)	£26.25	£27.00	2.9%
Musical Instrument Hire Category 4 (4 months)	£33.60	£34.00	1.2%
Musical Instrument Hire Category 5 (4 months)	£37.80	£38.50	1.9%
NSCYM Junior membership fee (9 sessions)	£45.90	£47.25	2.9%
NSCYM Senior membership fee (9 sessions)	£51.00	£52.50	2.9%
School of Pop & rock membership fee (9 sessions)	£40.80	£0.00	CEASED
NSCYM Pop & Rock School (9 sessions)		£47.25	NEW
Jazz Orchestra membership fee (9 sessions)	£35.70	£36.75	2.9%
NSCYM all other groups membership (9 sessions)	£25.50	£26.25	2.9%