

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning and Culture
2.	Date:	13th March 2012
3.	Title:	Leisure and Green Spaces and Cultural Services Fees and Charges 2012/13
4.	Directorate:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

The report outlines the annual review of fees and charges for Cultural Services and Leisure and Green Spaces in 2012/13.

6. Recommendations

6.1 That the fees and charges set out in Appendices B, C, and D and Cultural Services Concessionary application form be approved.

7. Proposals and Details

The annual review of fees and charges for Leisure and Green Spaces and Cultural Services has recently taken place. Where appropriate, proposed charges have been increased by at least the rate of inflation. Where charges have been increased by less than inflation rate or remain the same, this is either because increasing a price would incur additional costs (e.g. for changing ticket/photocopying machines) or because managers feel that a unit price increase would reduce overall income due to its impact on levels of business. It should be noted that several core services still remain essentially free of charge, e.g. public library service, museum service, archives and local studies service and casual access to green spaces and children's play areas. Where there is a charge there is often a concessionary rate and, in some cases, a junior Rothercard rate. Concessions are not restricted to off peak times as is the case in many other local authorities.

The charges for allotments are for financial year 2013/14. This is because allotment holders have to receive 12 months' statutory notice of any increase in line with Allotments legislation. As reported in March 2011, it is intended that allotment rents will increase faster than the rate of inflation over a period of years to bring them more into line with rents charged by other authorities. The proposed rent increase this year is in line with budget savings agreed by Members. Results of a survey published by the Association of Public Service Excellence in February 2012 shows that, of 131 local authorities who responded, 76.2% expected allotment rents to be the same or more in 2012-13 than Rotherham's proposed charge for 2013-14.

It is also proposed that allotment charges for individual plot holders will, in future, be calculated based on the number of square metres being rented, rather than on a flat rate regardless of plot size. This should have the following benefits:-

- It will be fairer than the current arrangement, ensuring all tenants of sites managed directly by Rotherham MBC pay the same amount per square metre
- It will allow individuals to choose to take on plots of different sizes, depending on their requirements
- It should help to reduce waiting lists by encouraging sub-division of plots, and thereby increasing the number of people who can be accommodated on each site.

Consideration is being given to introducing options for payment by instalments starting in 2013-14. It is intended that this will allow tenants to select a payment method that is best suited to their financial circumstances.

A slightly lower rate is proposed for calculating rent payments by allotment societies; this takes into account the fact that societies undertake some site management functions themselves. Another change is the introduction of a special rate for commercial tenants that better reflects the true value of land for such purposes.

The proposed charges would take effect from 1st April, 2012 (31st March, 2012, for Country Parks and 1st September, 2012, for Civic Theatre).

8. Finance

The impact of the charges will be closely monitored to ensure that income targets are being reached and that prices are reviewed throughout the year as demand dictates.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Any cost increase can have an adverse impact on levels of business, and this can make it difficult to meet income targets. Service Managers will continue to monitor usage and act on customer feedback when appropriate.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda

Sustainability: The proposals outlined will make a contribution to the sustainability of the service.

Corporate Priorities: The services/activities provided meet the Council priorities of improving lifestyle, health and skills and contribute to creating safe and healthy communities.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The charges have been developed in consultation with the Cultural Services Manager and Leisure Services Manager and Service Managers across the Service.

Appendix A – Front Sheet

Appendix B - Leisure and Green Spaces fees and charges 2012/13

Appendix C - Cultural Services fees and charges 2012/13.

Appendix D – Cultural Services fees and charges 2011/12

Appendix E - Cultural Services Concessionary use application form,

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