

FEES AND CHARGES – OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council charges set fees for the transfer of public open space and play areas on development sites. These were last set in 2008.
- 1.2 A thorough review of these charges is currently underway as part of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) regarding open space being produced to support the emerging Local Plan. It is likely the sums charged will rise significantly to provide the actual annual income necessary to maintain such spaces in “perpetuity”. This work will be informed by a fuller understanding of what the actual maintenance and replacement costs are for open space and play areas.
- 1.3 This work will however not be completed and adopted until spring 2019 and, until then, it is necessary to review what is charged and decide whether it would be appropriate to up the current charges to take account of inflation since they were last set.

2. THE CURRENT AND THE PROPOSED CHARGES

- 2.1 The Open Space charges as set in 2008 are as follows:

Open Space £56,000 per hectare

Rounded up to allow for inflation they would now be;

Open Space £72,500 per hectare

Play Area charges were set circa 2014 and as follows

Play Areas £140 per square metre hectare (with a minimum charge of £2,250)

To allow for inflation they would now be

Play Areas £160 per square metre (with a minimum charge of £2,500)

It seems entirely reasonable that the Council in the short term solely adjusts the fees to account for inflation pending the conclusion of the more thorough review currently underway. The Service Managers Policy and Strategy and Open Spaces are aware of and support the proposed temporary inflation based increase.

However it should be noted that no consultation with developers who fund the transfers and Town/Parish Councils who take on some of the open space and play areas has been undertaken. If the proposal was for more than an inflation based increase such a consultation would be required. It will be undertaken as part of the process of rolling out the SPD mentioned above.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It is hard to say what the proposed increases would bring in by the spring of next year as it is wholly dependent on new schemes approved and much of this income would accrue after this end date. This additional income would not cover the actual costs of maintaining such space but would reduce the scale of the current shortfall. As mentioned above the full costs cannot be ascertained until the work on the SPD is complete.

4. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are none.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The maintenance of Open Space and Play Areas to an appropriate standard enhances the environment of the District and the experience of those using the facilities.

6. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are none.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the proposed fees and charges for open space transfer at £72,000 per hectare and play area transfer at £160 per square metre, with a minimum charge of £2,500 as set out above be adopted with immediate effect.

8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ENDORSEMENT

I have agreed to the recommendation of this report.

Signed: CLLR E J HERON

Date: 21 September 2018

Date notice of decision given: 21 September 2018

Last date for call-in: 28 September 2018

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

None