

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET26 November 2020Report by Director of EducationCHARGING FOR SERVICES 2021/2022**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of the charging for services exercise carried out within the Education Department and to submit for approval the proposed fees and charges for 2021/2022.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. The Cabinet is asked to approve the following recommendations:

- Service Area 1 - Catering Service – School Meals  
To retain charges at their current levels.
- Service Area 2 – Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) – Additional Hours  
To retain charges at their current level.
- Service Area 3 – Instrumental Music Service  
To retain charges at their current levels.
- Service Area 4 – Provision for Pupils with Additional Support Needs who reside out with the Authority  
Revised charge to be set for 2021/22 following consideration of 2020/21 outturn.
- Service area 5 - School Transport – Privilege Place  
To retain charges at their current level.
- Service Area 6 – Easter Schools  
To remove charges for at least next financial year as part of the wider education recovery plan to address loss of learning as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**IMPACT OF CHARGES FOR 2020/2021**

3. The COVID -19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the availability and uptake of chargeable services across the department. The closure of all educational establishments (other than Hub provision for the most vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers) from 20 March 2020 resulted in no chargeable services being provided for the remainder of academic session 2019/20.

The most significant impact on income levels since the re-opening of schools and early years' centres from August 2020 can be summarised as follow :-

- The approved 5% increase in charges for school meals was applied from the start of the current school session in August 2020. At the same time new food regulations have been adopted which has impacted on available menu options/sundry items for sale. Since re-opening schools have encouraged all pupils to remain in school at lunchtime. Despite this schools have seen an increase in the number of pupils bringing their own packed lunches (rather than purchase a school meal) which is at least in part due to parental/pupil anxiety around the ongoing risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic but may also be due to financial difficulties being experienced by many families at this time. The combined impact of these factors has resulted in a significant reduction in income with the latest available data showing a drop in school meal uptake from those eligible to pay of around 25% across primary and secondary schools. Similar reductions in uptake are being experienced across all local authorities and in terms of the secondary sector an average reduction of 31% is being experienced by those authorities responding to a recent survey. Actions to help mitigate this have included all ERC schools taking advantage of the national Eat Out to Help Out scheme during August as well as locally extending this 50% price reduction to schools in our most deprived communities during the month of September. Officers also continue to look for compliant substitutes for items removed from menus due to food regulation changes.
- Whilst demand for the purchase of additional hours within early years' settings (previously referred to as wraparound) had been increasing year on year since the price was reduced to £2.25 per hour in 2017, income levels were expected to drop during 2020/21 due to the increase in free early learning and childcare provision to 1,140 hours from August 2020. Despite the introduction of the statutory obligation to move to 1,140 hours of free early learning and childcare being postponed due to the pandemic, parents/carers within East Renfrewshire are benefitting from the increased free provision this session albeit not always accessing their preferred delivery model or first choice establishment. This has meant the ability to offer parents/carers the option of purchasing additional hours has been very limited to date. Evidence does suggest though that in family centres, in particular, there remains demand for this facility.
- Charges for instrumental music were again maintained at £300 per annum for 2020/21 with East Renfrewshire continuing to be amongst the highest nationally when compared to charges levied by other local authorities. Restrictions in place to minimise the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on the uptake of this service. Tuition for some instruments such as woodwind or brass are prohibited whilst others are being delivered remotely. The latest data suggests a drop-off of around 50% in terms of pupils eligible to pay for instrumental music tuition.
  - Given the timing of the school closures in March 2020 the planned Easter schools for this year were cancelled and therefore no income collected but similarly no costs incurred therefore from a financial viewpoint no overall impact on the current year's budget.

For all chargeable services, it is anticipated that some income loss support funding will be provided by central government to local authorities to help mitigate the impact of this on council budgets, at least for 2020/21.

## DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES FOR CHARGING

4. The majority of charges for Education services are set to recover part costs in recognition of the links to local and national policy priorities/legislation.

## SERVICES REVIEWED & PROPOSED CHARGES FOR 2021/2022

5. The services reviewed and recommendations for 2021/22 are summarised in the tables below. Further information on each service area is available for scrutiny on request.

6. Where relevant, inflationary uplifts have been applied using the corporately agreed inflation figures of 1.3% for 2020/21 and 1.9% for 2021/22.

7. A summary of the department's concessions and discounts is also available for scrutiny on request.

8. In the table below, the following codes are used to denote the Charging Classification and Policy for 2021/2022 in respect of each service area:

9.

### Classification:

- i. To accord with policy/strategy
- ii. Market based charge
- iii. Statutory charge

### Charging Policy:

- a) Charge to recover full cost
- b) Charge to recover part cost
- c) Charge to make contribution to service revenue
- d) Charges which are nationally prescribed
- e) Charges to recover marginal cost

Service	Current Charge 2020/2021	Proposed Charge 2021/2022	Charge Classification 2021/22	Charging Policy 2021/22	Recommendation
1. Catering Service - School Meals	Primary - £2.10 Secondary - £2.30	Primary - £2.10 Secondary - £2.30	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part cost	To retain charges at current levels
2. ELC - Additional Hours	£2.25 per hour for all age groups	£2.25 per hour for all age groups	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part cost	To retain charges at current levels
3. Instrumental Music Service	£300 per year which equates to an hourly rate of £20; Membership of choral groups : £75; Singing Games and Rhymes (P2 & P3) : £130 per year	£300 per year which equates to an hourly rate of £20 Membership of choral groups : £75 Singing Games and Rhymes (P2 & P3) : £130 per year	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part cost	To retain charges at current levels

4. Provision for Pupils with Additional Support Needs outwith the authority	Annual charge per full time place :- Carlibar Communications Centre £17,512; Secondary Language & Communication Unit £21,235; Isobel Mair School £31,495; Isobel Mair Family Centre £19,579; Carlibar PSADU £11,564	Revised charge to be set for 2021/2022 following consideration of 2020/2021 outturn.	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(a) Charge to recover full cost	Revised charge to be set for 2021/2022 following consideration of 2020/2021 outturn.
5. School Transport – Privilege Place	£2.10 per day, £1.05 per single journey (plus admin fee of £2 per month)	£2.10 per day, £1.05 per single journey (plus admin fee of £2 per month)	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(a) Charge to make a contribution to service revenue	To retain charges at current level.
6. Easter Schools	£68 per week or £15 per day with full concession for pupils who would qualify under the benefits system for free school meals.	No charges levied as part of wider recovery strategy to address loss of learning.	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	Suspend policy of Charging to recover full cost	No charges to be made for accessing the service during the period of education recovery.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

10. As has been highlighted in previous years there is the tension between maximising income and discouraging demand. With this in mind and taking into account the unprecedented circumstances highlighted in paragraph 3 the recommendation is that no increases in charges are recommended for 2021/22.

The key implications for the services noted in this report are forecast as follows.

### Catering Services - School Meals

11. As the catering service continues to operate under COVID-19 restrictions officers are closely monitoring uptake and will work locally with Head Teachers and all stakeholders to minimise the potentially longer term impact on demand. The recent rollout of a pre-order app across secondary schools will not only assist in compliance with current physical distancing requirements but also addresses user feedback around queuing times being a factor which has discouraged uptake in the past. Any such longer term decline in demand will be considered as part of the budget setting process and charging recommendations in future years.

### Early Learning and Childcare – Additional Hours

12. Subject to physical and staffing capacities, there will be some increase in the ability of early years' centres to offer parents/carers the ability to purchase additional hours once the delayed new/expanded facilities become operational. Given the financial impact COVID-19 is

having on the income of many families across East Renfrewshire it is recommended that the existing hourly rate of £2.25 be maintained. Parent/carers own working arrangements going forward (e.g. increase in home working) will clearly influence demand therefore feedback from the current consultation exercise with parents/carers will be key to informing future income targets and charging policies.

### **Instrumental Music Service**

13. As noted above, East Renfrewshire remains amongst the most expensive of local authorities who do charge for this service. Taking this into account, coupled with the significant drop in uptake as a result ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions a further increase is not recommended at this time. Officers will continue to explore all viable options for delivering the service, including a return to face to face lessons as soon as possible.

### **Easter Schools**

14. It is widely recognised that the disruption caused by school closures will have had a negative impact on the learning and wellbeing of many children. Research suggests that the poverty related attainment gap will widen due to this period of lost learning. Addressing this issue is a key priority both locally and at national level, with specific grant funding provided for additional teachers and support staff to be employed over the course of the current academic year. Easter school provision within East Renfrewshire is highly valued as it delivers targeted study support/revision in advance of the annual national examination diet. As such it will be key to addressing learning loss within the secondary sector over the next few years and therefore the removal of charges for all pupils will ensure that the ability to pay is not a barrier in accessing this support. Following the recent cancellation of National 5 examinations this session, Head Teachers are now considering the best approach locally in terms of Easter school planning for 2021.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY**

15. The impact of the proposal noted have been taken into account in the preparation of revenue budgets for 2021/22 and where appropriate spending pressures have been included.

## **CONSULTATION**

16. Consultation has been undertaken with various stakeholders in a number of service areas, for example:

- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 details the requirement for local authorities to consult on early learning and childcare every 2 years. The department's latest consultation with parents closed on 22 November 2020 and will help shape future delivery of 1140 hours of free provision.
- In terms of school meals, consultation with users takes place regularly to inform menu planning, marketing and service delivery. It is hoped that an online survey can be completed later in this current school session.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

17. The Cabinet is asked to approve the following recommendations:

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November 2020

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