

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET25 November 2021Report by Director of EducationEDUCATION DEPARTMENT - CHARGING FOR SERVICES 2022/23**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 2022/2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Service Area 1 - Catering Service – School and Early Years Meals
 - To retain charges at their current levels for primary meals pending the full rollout of universal free school meals to all stages by August 2022.
 - To increase charges within the secondary sector by 4%
 - To introduce the option to purchase a lunch within the early years sector when accessing childcare provision outwith the statutory 1,140 hours of free early learning and childcare.
- Service Area 2 – Add On Sessions (Early Learning and Childcare)

To increase charges from August 2022 to the following hourly rate equivalent cost:-

 - 3-5 year olds £3.00
 - 2 year olds £3.75
 - 0-2 year olds £4.50
- Service Area 3 – Instrumental Music Service

In line with Scottish Government policy commitments, extend the removal of charges for instrumental music tuition in schools for session 2022/23 and retain charges for other services provided at current levels.
- Service Area 4 – Provision for Pupils with Additional Support Needs who reside out with the Authority

Revised charge to be set for 2022/23 following consideration of 2021/22 outturn.
- Service area 5 - School Transport – Privilege Place

To retain charges at their current level.
- Service Area 6 – Easter Schools

In line with Scottish Government policy commitments, extend the removal of charges for Easter school provision in 2022.

- Service Area 7 – Isobel Mair Extended Day
To retain charges at current level pending wider review of service provision.

IMPACT OF CHARGES FOR 2021/2022

3. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact on both availability and uptake of chargeable services across the department. Despite all establishments remaining open and operational since April 2021, guidance around ventilation, social distancing as well as some staff and pupils having to self-isolate over the period have all had an adverse effect on income levels.

4. Recent Scottish Government policy decisions to expand the universal entitlement to free school meals within the primary sector and to remove certain charges associated with instrumental music tuition and others linked to the core curriculum have also impacted on income levels since the start of academic session 2021/22. Additional grant funding has however been provided/is expected to offset the budgetary implications of these national policy commitments.

5. The most significant impacts on income levels to date this year can be summarised as follows :-

- Currently the uptake of meals within the secondary sector is around 20% less than pre-pandemic levels. Around 15% of this was anticipated and budgeted for due to changes in food regulations during this period so it is estimated that 5% can be attributed to the ongoing COVID impact, e.g. pupil absence and impact of staff absence on menu choices etc.
- Although 1,140 hours of free early learning and childcare (ELC) was successfully implemented from August 2020, COVID related infrastructure delays meant the ability to offer any 'add-on' options for parents/carers since then has been very limited. From August 2021 the final new setting opened at Overlee Family Centre and the department is now looking to re-introduce this service where spaces/staffing ratios allow.
- Restrictions in place to minimise the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact on the uptake of the instrumental music service with a 50% reduction experienced during school session 2020/21. However the removal of charges (at least for the current academic session) has seen demand for the service steadily increase since schools returned in August and the service has now resumed teaching of all instruments The Saturday Music Centre is also now back in operation.

During 2021/22, reported COVID related income loss is expected to be offset by remaining central government funding allocated to local authorities to help mitigate the impact of this on council budgets.

DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES FOR CHARGING

6. The majority of remaining 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 2022/2023

7. The services reviewed and recommendations for 2022/23 are summarised in the table below. Further information on each service area is available for scrutiny on request.

8. Where relevant, inflationary uplifts have been applied using the corporately agreed inflation figures of 2.5% for 2021/22 and 3.7% for 2022/23.

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

10. In the table below, the following codes are used to denote the Charging Classification and Policy for 2022/2023 in respect of each service area:

11.

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 2021/2022	Proposed Charge 2022/2023	Charge Classification 2022/23	Charging Policy 2022/23	Recommendation
1. Catering Service – School and ELC Meals	Primary - £2.10 Secondary - £2.30	Primary - £2.10 Secondary - £2.40 Early Years - £3.00	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part costs (primary and secondary) and full cost (early years)	To retain charges at the current level for primary pupils pending full rollout of universal free school meals from August 2022. To apply revised charges for secondary meals from August 2022 and to introduce a paid meals service in early year's settings with price charged in line with agreed lunch rate paid to ELC external providers.
2. Add-On ELC Sessions (formerly known as wraparound)	Equivalent to £2.25 per hour for all age groups accessing sessions available per setting	Equivalent to the following rates per hour to access sessions available per setting :- 3-5 year olds - £3.00 2 year olds - £3.75 0-2 year olds - £4.50	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part cost	To increase charges per session from August 2022 with new pricing model reflecting varying staffing ratios required by Care Inspectorate to provide childcare for under 5s.
3. Instrumental Music Service	Charges for instrumental music tuition removed from August 2021 (previously £300 per year). Membership of choral groups : £75; Singing Games and Rhymes (P2 & P3) : £130 per year	No charge for instrumental music per Scottish Government policy commitment; 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	Remove charges for instrumental music tuition for 2022/23 pending development of longer term national policy and funding commitment. To retain charges at current levels for Membership of choral groups and Singing, Games and Rhymes.

4. Provision for Pupils with Additional Support Needs outwith the authority	Annual charge per full time place :- Carlibar Communications Centre £17,950 Secondary Language & Communication Unit £21,766; Isobel Mair School £32,282; Isobel Mair Family Centre £20,068; Carlibar PSADU £11,853	Revised charge to be set for 2022/2023 following consideration of 2022/2023 outturn.	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(a) Charge to recover full cost	Revised charge to be set for 2022/2023 following consideration of 2021/2022 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	No charges levied as part of wider recovery strategy to address loss of learning.	No charge for Easter Schools per Scottish Government policy commitment in relation to the removal of charges associated with the core curriculum.	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	Suspend policy of Charging to recover full cost	Remove charges for Easter Schools for 2022/23 pending development of longer term national policy and funding commitment.
7. Isobel Mair Extended Day	£4.60 per hour	£4.60 per hour	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part cost	To retain charges at current levels pending wider review of service provision.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

12. As has been highlighted, charges for instrumental music tuition and Easter schools have been removed in line with Scottish Government policy for academic year 2021/22. Within ERC, charges for Easter schools had already been removed for 2021 as part of the wider education recovery plan. Due to ongoing COVID restrictions, this year's Easter schools were provided via a blended model of online and face to face sessions. Feedback from schools suggest that despite some sessions being online, uptake was in line with pre pandemic levels. Planning for Easter schools next April is still at an early stage but the ongoing removal of charges and hopefully the option for all schools to offer face to face supported study in advance of the SQA examination diet will be welcomed by pupil, parents and Head Teachers.

13. The removal of charges for instrumental music tuition has already led to increased demand for the service with uptake almost back to pre-pandemic levels. Pending the outcome of national negotiations around a sustainable and funded model the service will seek to meet ongoing demand subject to staffing capacity and available musical instruments.

14. For services where charges continue to be levied, there remains a tension between maximising income and discouraging demand which along with points made in paragraphs 3 and 4 has been taken into account in the recommendations made.

The key implications for these services are forecast as follows.

Catering Services – School and ELC Meals

15. Uptake in school meals across secondary schools has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels and the service continues to be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions and staff absences. The scale and timing of the recommended increase takes this into account but is also made in the context of increasing food costs and the scale of further savings required across council services. The 10p per meal increase would bring the cost per secondary school lunch up to the national average based on the latest benchmarking data available.

16. The facility to purchase a lunch within early years' settings when accessing provision outwith the statutory 1,140 hours provision is included to meet parental demand. Since August 2021, children accessing their entitlement to 1,140 hours of free early learning and childcare receive a free lunch as part of their chosen delivery model. Introducing the option to buy a lunch during additional 'add-on' sessions adds to the level of flexibility offered to parents/carers.

Add On Sessions (Early Learning and Childcare)

17. The current hourly rate of £2.25 has been in place since 2017 when the entitlement to free ELC was 600 hours per year. The recommended increase in charges at this stage is made in the context of free ELC provision increasing by 90% since August 2020 and the wider financial challenges faced by the council, particularly in terms of funding associated with early years expansion.

18. Staffing requirements within early years' settings vary depending on the age of the children attending. For example a staffing ratio of one adult to eight children applies for 3-5 year olds but for children under the age of 2 the ratio is one adult for every three children. Therefore the cost to provide ELC increases significantly for younger children and this has been factored into the new pricing model being recommended.

19. Whilst the charges recommended represent a significant increase they remain below the level charged pre August 2017 which was £4.60 per hour and the service remains significantly subsidised in order to support parents/carers. Benchmarking data suggests that the proposed charges for 3-5 year olds, for example, would still be lower than neighbouring authorities and significantly lower than the funded providers in the private and voluntary sector.

20. The facility to purchase Add On sessions, with payment made via the online ParentPay system subject to availability within each centre, will give parents/carers greater flexibility in arranging additional childcare. For session 2022/23, Add On will be available for parents/carers in advance through the annual allocations process, enabling families to plan ahead and have certainty of the additional hours for the entire session, subject to continued payment.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY

21. The impact of the proposal noted have been taken into account in the preparation of revenue budgets for 2022/23 and where appropriate spending pressures have been included.

CONSULTATION

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

The latest ELC guidance refers to the duty included in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which requires that local authorities consult on ELC every 2 years. 53% of the families who responded to the latest survey in November 2020 noted that they would like to be able to purchase additional hours. The majority of respondents who expressed a preference for full day provision were accessing Extended Hours, Stretched B or a Private or Voluntary Nursery where long days are available. The availability of full days from 8am – 6pm was a common reason for choosing a private or voluntary nursery where families also have the option to attend all year and buy extra days.

In terms of school meals, consultation with users takes place regularly to inform menu planning, marketing and service delivery. This takes the form of online surveys as well as managers attending pupil forums to gain feedback on the service. Whilst the COVID pandemic has impacted on the level of consultation undertaken over the last year, engagement with stakeholders is planned before the end of the current academic session.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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November 2021

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Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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