

Green Sefton Fees and Charges 2025/26

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| Date of Issue: | 7 January 2025 | |
| Date of Decision: | 15 January 2025 | |
| Report to: | Cabinet Member - Public Health and Wellbeing | |
| Report of: | Assistant Director - Operational In-House Services | |
| Portfolio: | Cabinet Member - Public Health and Wellbeing | |
| Wards affected: | All | |
| Is this a key decision: | No | No |
| Included in Forward Plan: | | |
| Exempt/confidential report: | No | |

Summary:

Green Sefton fees and charges for 2025/26 are set out in the report and are proposed to adoption and enactment from 1st April 2025. Following agreement, these will be implemented and where necessary communicated with partner organisations such as sports clubs and Allotment Associations as well as being made available online.

Recommendation(s):

(1) Cabinet Member approves the Green Sefton fees and charges for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendix

1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations**Introduction**

This report presents proposed fees and charges for the Green Sefton portfolio for 2025/26.

Given the financial circumstances the Council continues to find itself in, it is important to ensure that income is recovered to offset costs and/or reduce any subsidies.

Background

Cabinet Member is aware that Green Sefton apply a range of fees and charges for its services and facilities and this income is critical to setting a balanced service budget. Our fees and charges cover a range of services, such as:

- Public Events
- Sport and Recreation
- Grounds Maintenance
- Land / Building Hire
- Parking Charges
- Education and Training Activities

As per the Service Vision to 2030, and the Green Sefton Service Plan annually, Green Sefton's annual review of fees and charges is an important annual consideration for the service.

Proposed Fees and Charges 2025/26

To assist understanding a consistent layout has been followed by all departments. This illustrates current charges, the charge which would apply if an inflationary increase was applied (Consumer Price Index, CPI, for September each year) and the proposed fees with the increase identified for each item. The Cabinet Member can then consider whether the charge is appropriate.

The list of proposed 2025/26 fees and charges for the Green Sefton service is included at Appendix 1. This is a comprehensive list i.e. it includes areas where the Council is able to set fees but also those areas that are subject to statutory increases.

Factors Influencing Fees and Charges 2025/26

In recommending fees and charges in 2025/26 officers have needed to consider, line by line, the likely impact whilst bearing in mind the financial pressure the authority finds itself under, together with the ongoing pressures within the Green Sefton budgets too. The following issues have been considered:

- Would any increase impact the ability of the public to use services?
- What charges do commercial competitors or other local authorities make?
- Is there a demand for the service or not?
- Are there any statutory responsibilities concerned with the setting of charges?
- How might our fees and charges compare with adjoining local authorities?

Key Changes

The Appendix attached outlines all fees and charges made by Green Sefton in 2024/25 and outlines proposals for fees and charges in 2025/26 – with changes in red text.

In general, normally our overall recommendation is to seek to increase fees broadly in line with inflation. However, there are some key changes and additions, and we would wish to specifically highlight the grounds for the proposals.

Table 1: Key Changes in 2025/26

| Fee or Charge | Change | Justification | Outcome |
|--|---|--|---|
| Charges for community/ volunteer groups arranging events for charity | Introduce 50% charge, with evidence of charitable donation provided | The Council has previously offered free access to sites for those undertaking activity for 'charity' (as opposed to for business use). However, given the Council's financial pressure, and concern has been raised that some groups don't provide evidence of such donations being made (and/ or may not be the Council priority), a new charge is proposed | Introduce 50% charge, with evidence of charitable donation provided |
| Administration fees | Ensure administration fees are charged, and increased to 25% | Although the charging has been possible, it seems officers haven't been charging the 15% administration charge on top of utilities/ for other issues cited in the appendix – this will need to be emphasised and implemented this year in order to remove such subsidy. Further, it has been identified that a 15% charge does not cover the administration of dealing with such charging (and the many request for clarification/ challenges that are often received), and also, noting that, ideally, the accounts would be passed to the self managed Associations/ users anyway (which will need amended leases in some cases too) | Officers to begin implementing said charge, which is to be increased to 25% |
| Sport and Recreation generally | Increase by inflation | Many areas of the services charges have only been increased by inflation | Increase by inflation |
| Golf Courses | Remain the same | Golf is a very competitive market, and increases were imposed in 24/25, and so no further increases are proposed at this time | Remain the same |
| School/ education and | | It is likely that officers may not be covering full costs (thinking of the | Minimal changes proposed |

| Fee or Charge | Change | Justification | Outcome |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 'forest school' rates | | actual costs with 2.2 multiplier concept elsewhere in the proposals) BUT we 'should' be undertaking such efforts, as part of environmental education and engagement anyway, (teaching next generation), and so only minimal increases are proposed, bearing in mind that due to lack of staff capacity, very little of this activity is undertaken anyway | |
| Other income | | Events, photo, boot camps, membership scheme etc – although there are charges cited, and some are proposed for increase, it should be noted that there is a lack of staff capacity to enforce such/ nor to grow potential in these areas, and so some have been removed this year (such as the membership scheme, and foot/ frisbee golf) | Minimal changes proposed |
| Beach Parking - Southport | Discussion required for proposed closure of car parking at Southport Beach from 2025 onwards | CM paper to follow Winter 25 | Discussion required for proposed closure of car parking at Southport Beach from 2025 onwards |
| Commercial activities - income | Broadly increased by 15% overall, including services offered to other council departments. Staff time to be recharged with a 2.2 multiplier | Officers continue to provide grounds maintenance services in particular to some other land owners, but haven't had capacity to develop this model fully. This will remain the case for the coming year, with a 'sustain the existing customer base/ income approach' for the time being | Ongoing |

2. Financial Implications

There are no costs associated with this report, but fees and charges form a key part of the overall Council budget. Income that is generated contributes towards income targets and the associated costs of running the service. There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

The proposed changes in fees and charges (as appropriate) will result in an uplift to income received by the service, which is to be ring fenced to fund additional borrowing costs for the replacement of fleet and machinery.

3. Legal Implications

There are no anticipated legal implications with this report. However, the Allotment Acts require that allotment increases be “reasonable” and therefore it has been necessary to consider reasonableness when determining our rates.

4. Corporate Risk Implications

Usage of some facilities may reduce as a result of increases, but every effort has been made to balance this as set out in the report

5 Staffing HR Implications

There are no staffing implications.

6 Conclusion

Sefton residents are experiencing increasing financial hardship and where possible we have sought to add new fees and charges and to increase fees above inflation only for commercial income areas, and if there are reasonable grounds for doing so. Some changes have been proposed also, based on observing income trends, and noting the challenges the authority faces also, together with the removal of some areas where staff capacity has meant some innovations (such as the membership scheme, frisbee and foot golf) have been abandoned.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None, an annual review of fees and charges is an expected requirement of service areas

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| Equality Implications: |
| There are no equality implications. |
| Impact on Children and Young People: |
| Any increase in fees may impact some children and young people. |
| Climate Emergency Implications: |
| The content of this report sets out the fees and charges associated with the work and projects undertaken by Green Sefton to manage the facilities and landscapes in Sefton. |
| Landscape can largely contribute to the climate emergency in terms of mitigation and adaptation: |
| Climate change mitigation broadly refers to limiting the amount and pace of future climate change, by reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere i.e. by planting more trees, shrubs, wildflowers etc, and by proactively changing the way in which we undertake activities and provide our facilities and services. |
| Climate change adaptation refers broadly to the measures needed to adapt our society to the climate changes that we won't be able to avoid, even with perfect mitigation. |

These include increases in temperature, more severe weather events, and associated risks to infrastructure, human health, and natural ecosystems.

The fees and charges associated with the service are fundamental to its financial management, and the development of the landscape, and the benefits this brings to the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis agendas.

It is therefore considered that the work of Green Sefton has a positive effect on climate change.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Commercial (FD..7857/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5957/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None.

Implementation Date for the Decision :

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Cabinet Member decision

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix 1 **FD-7857 – Annex – FL Green Sefton Fees and Charges**