

ANNUAL CHARGES REVIEW 2023/24 BRIEFING NOTE

for Finance and Governance Committee 17 November 2022

1. Background

As part of the budget setting process, the Parish Council reviews its charging schedule each November, with agreed changes taking effect from the start of the next financial year (1 April 2023). In the case of allotment fees, these take effect from 1 October each year when annual renewal invoices are issued.

This briefing note provides further information into the rationale behind the proposed charges for next year. In all cases, the intention is to obtain the correct balance between the Parish Council achieving a reasonable fee to cover the cost of providing the service, and continuing to provide effective, affordable services for residents and other users. Where indicated, benchmarking against other local providers has taken place to provide comparative data for Members’ consideration.

At the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 13 October 2022, Members agreed to recommend to Council that charges will be sensitively reviewed and any increases agreed be applied to the budget. This was ratified by Council on 20 October 2022 and therefore each set of fees has been considered individually with charges applied accordingly for consideration by Members as listed in this report.

In general, a 5% increase has been applied to most fee increases. It is possible that current high indices such as the Consumer Price Index will settle back to around 5% next year. Wherever appropriate, calculations have been rounded to the nearest 5 pence to simplify the charging structure for the benefit of both residents and those staff members involved in dealing with queries in relation to fees and charges.

The Parish Council’s fee structure is broken down into several categories, and each is examined below with proposed charges for consideration along with recommendations as set out in the paper.

2. Parking Discs and Dog Bags

The Parish Council sells parking discs and dog bags from the office. All payments for these are made in cash and banked for a small fee. Parking discs supplied by Mid Sussex District Council are charged to the Parish Council at 80 pence each and the Parish Council charges the public £1 per disc to cover the banks cash handling fee. The charge for dog bags purchased via JRB Enterprise Ltd is £29.93 net per one box of 2,000 bags (i.e. 75 pence for one pack of fifty bags). The Parish Council charges the public £1 per pack to cover the banks cash handling fee. It is proposed to make no changes to the fees currently charged for the sale of parking discs and dog poo bags.

GENERAL	Current 2022/23	Proposed 2023/24
Parking Discs	£1.00	£1.00
Dog bags – pack of 50	£1.00	£1.00

RECOMMENDATION 1 – Parking discs and a pack of fifty dog bags to remain at £1.00.

3. Allotments

Members will recall that under the Allotments Act 1922, there is provision that allotment holders must be given 12 months’ notice of any change in rental charges, unless otherwise stated in their tenancy agreement. The tenancy agreements were reviewed and updated during 2020, and this now enables the council to give three months’ notice of changes in the future. Now the budget is being considered for 2023/24, a price increase to take effect from 1 October 2023 can be agreed.

Although the tenancy year runs from 1 October to 30 September, a tenant taking on a plot after 1 April and therefore having less than six months of the term until renewal will be charged 50% of the standard plot fee.

Please note that the Hurstpierpoint Allotment Association charge a £5 “membership” fee on top, which the Parish Council collects for them. When issuing invoices, the £5 Association membership fee is added, which is then paid over to the Allotment Association once all invoices are paid.

The budgeted income for the Allotments in 2022/23 is £2,500. Income for the year currently stands at £2,947 (118%) but £500 will shortly be paid over to the Allotment Association for their membership fees collected on their behalf. Each year the allotment tenants are invoiced on 1 September and required to pay by 30 September. 100% of the income is always achieved as if a tenant does not pay their fee, they forfeit the plot and with a long waiting list, empty plots are immediately filled.

Other local parish councils provide allotment plots but they all charge in a different way, so it is hard to compare like for like. The Parish Council plots range from 2 rods to our biggest plot of 10 rods. The average size of a plot is 2.5 and 5 rods. The current rod fee is £4.85. The following table only provides a rough comparison of costs as not all plot sizes are measured in the same way:

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common PC	Rustington PC	Hassocks PC	Cowfold PC
£4.85 per rod 2.5 rod plot is £12.13 5 rod plot is £24.25	£7.50 per rod 2.5 rod plot £18.75 5 rod plot £37.50	£19 per quarter plot £38 per half plot Includes membership fee	Charges range from £14 to £24 per year per plot

The Parish Council fee is therefore significantly less expensive than Rustington, Hassocks and similar to the Cowfold plots. Therefore, to increase the current charge of £4.85 by 5% gives £5.09 which is still less than neighbouring sites. This has been rounded to £5.10 which is an increase of 25 pence.

ALLOTMENTS	Current 2022/23	Proposed 2023/24
Allotment rental (per rod)	£4.85	£5.10

RECOMMENDATION 2 – A 5% increase change to the allotment fees for 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024 to rise from £4.85 per rod to £5.10 per rod.

4. South Avenue Cemetery

The 2022/23 budgeted income is £9,000. Whilst this is purely a budgeted figure and clearly not a target, income for the year currently stands at £3,576 (40%).

In assessing the price increase for next year, a review of other local cemeteries was completed to assess how our fees compared. The charges for Ditchling Parish Council, Burgess Hill Town Council and Hassocks Parish Council’s cemeteries have been reviewed and are set out below. Each has a similar charging structure and shows a single grave purchase and interment as £624 at South Avenue Cemetery, £1,244 at Burgess Hill, £392 at Hassocks and £494 at Ditchling:

South Avenue	Burgess Hill TC	Hassocks PC	Ditchling PC
Single Width Plot £416 Double Width Plot £780 Grave Interment £208	Grave Purchase £656 Plus Interment Fee: Single Depth £588 Double Depth £636	Grave Plot & First interment: Single depth £392 Double depth £510 Second interment £127	Grave Plot £210 First Interment: £284 (Single depth plot) £420 (Double plot) 2nd Interment £275

Ashes plots, ashes interments and memorial permits (the right for a headstone and kerb-set to be placed on the grave) can be compared as shown below. A single ashes plot purchase and first interment is £260 at South Avenue Cemetery, £439 at Burgess Hill, £279 at Hassocks:

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common PC	Burgess Hill TC	Hassocks PC	Ditchling PC
Memorial £156 Kerb-set £156 Extra Inscription £52 Ashes Plot £156 1st Interment £104 2nd Interment £104	Memorial £148 Extra Inscription £54 Ashes plot £286 plus: 1st Interment £153 2nd Interment: £164 3rd Interment £170	Memorial £127 Extra Inscription £63 Ashes Plot: 1st Interment £279 2nd Interment £107	Memorial £160

Each of the cemeteries charges a multiplier for non-parishioners. All the councils apply this multiplier to grave or ashes plot purchases and interments, but only some apply this to ancillary fees relating to installation of monuments, administrative fees, etc. Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council currently charge 5 x fees to non-residents of the parish for plot purchases and interments, but removed the multiplier for other services in 2021/2022. The definition as to what classes as a non-resident is as follows:

“Where the person to be interred, or in respect of whom the right is granted, is a resident of the parish of Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common.”

The published fees are therefore broken down into two parts:

Part 1 – Purchase and Interments

The Parish Council continues to charge 5 x fees to adults who do not live in the parish. The Parish Council does not charge a fee for under 18 year olds, as under law, children’s burials are free to the family. If it were relevant, any claims for costs can be made to the Government’s Children’s Funeral Fund.

Consideration has been given to the small number of graves and ashes plots remaining in the Cemetery, and to the rising costs of maintaining the cemetery and chapel. The following proposed increases of 5% on all fees are below the level of inflation but ensures costs can be covered:

Part 1 - Purchases and Interments	Current 2022/23	Proposed 2023/24
Single width burial plot	£416	£437
Double width burial plot	£780	£819
Interment	£208	£219
Ashes plot	£156	£163
Ashes interred into existing grave	£104	£110
Ashes scattered on existing grave, or interred in Ashes plot	£104	£110

RECOMMENDATION 3 – To agree the proposed charges for part 1 of the cemetery charging schedule, where a 5 x fees multiplier will be applied to non-residents of the parish.

Part 2 – Monuments, Administration and Chapel

The council charges a single fee for both residents and non-residents of the parish:

Part 2 – Monuments, Administration and Chapel	Current 2022/23	Proposed 2023/24
For the right to install a headstone	£156	£163
For the right to install a set of kerb-set	£156	£163
For the right to add an inscription to an existing stone	£52	£55
For the right to place a Garden of Rest tablet or vase	£67	£71
Burial record search/grant amendment	£46	£49
Use of cemetery chapel	£104	£110

RECOMMENDATION 4 – To agree the proposed charges for part 2 of the cemetery charging schedule which is the same for both residents and non-residents of the parish.

5. Hire of Recreation Grounds

South Avenue Recreation Ground and the Village Garden are occasionally hired out for events most notably for the St Lawrence Fair, the Hurst Festival Super Sunday event and the Traders Christmas event. The Parish Council has an events policy and this includes the option to charge a hire fee for a commercial event. Traditionally, fun fairs and circuses have visited South Avenue Recreation Ground and not paid a hire fee. A £400 good order deposit is paid and refunded if ground conditions and waste etc are left in a reasonable state. Following a survey of other councils, many charge for the hire of recreation grounds or village greens for small commercial events or fun fairs and circuses.

Last year it was proposed that a small fee was charged for commercial events. There was no intention to charge for the regular non-commercial events held. There were also a small number of requests from residents to hold short private events on South Avenue Recreation Ground for which a £30 admin fee was charged. It is proposed that this is included more formally this year.

It is proposed that the fees are increased by 5% for 2023/24:

OUTDOOR COMMERCIAL EVENTS (such as Fun Fairs and Circuses)	Current 2022/23	Proposed 2023/24 Per Day
Hire of Outdoor Space for Commercial Events (To include a £400 good order deposit.)	£120.00	£126.00
Set Up / Dismantle Days	£50.00	£53.00
One-off hire by residents for small private events	£30.00 (informal)	£32

RECOMMENDATION 5 – To agree the proposed charges for the hire of outdoor space for a commercial event of £126/£53 and £32 for a one-off small private event.

6. Court Bushes Community Hub

The budgeted income for Court Bushes in 2022/23 is £40,797. Income for the year currently stands at £23,326 (57%). Although some payments have been received in advance for events in the second half of the year, the use of the Function Room has increased significantly in recent months and the target is expected to be achieved.

A simplified approach to the pricing structure is applied that uses a single base level fee to be agreed for each room, then a simple factoring for other time slots is applied evenly, as set out below:

- Weekday daytime, Sunday daytime – base level

- Weekday evening, Saturday daytime, Sunday evening – base level plus 25%
- Friday/Saturday evening – base level plus 75%

Future charges reviews only need to consider the base level price for each room, and then factor up accordingly for each session.

Last year it was agreed for regular hirers that the fee structure was based on a single standard fee, and then a 25% discount applied to qualifying hirers. Confirmation of who qualifies for the discount was agreed as follows:

“The discounted rate applies to local groups or clubs who can demonstrate that they are not for profit and are providing a service for community or social engagement, or for hirers booking a minimum of ten sessions at a time.”

A benchmarking exercise has been conducted, reviewing the fees charged by providers of other local facilities namely, Ditchling Village Hall, Adastra Hall, Hassocks and Westmeston Parish Hall. Based on an hour for hour comparison our fees are a lot less than other halls but it is important to note that Court Bushes cannot be hired by the hour and hire sessions are only sold in five hourly slots from 8am-1pm, 1pm to 6pm and 6pm to 11pm. If a hirer only wants to hire a room for say two hours, they are still required to pay for the five hour session thereby making their booking slightly less favourable than other venues available on an hourly rate. It is not proposed that the Parish Council’s five hour sessions hiring policy is changed.

Ditchling Village Hall seats approx. 125-150 people (Court Bushes Function Room seats a maximum of 150 people) charges £20 per hour on a weekday and £23 per hour on the weekend. Westmeston Parish Hall seats up to 80 people and charges £10 per hour, and £20 on a Friday or Saturday night.

Adastra Hall in Hassocks charge on a sessional basis so a more direct comparison is possible. While the size and range of facilities at each venue differs, the comparisons are useful to gauge where our current fees sit within the local market. The Adastra main hall aligns to the Function Room size (both seat up to approx. 150 people) and the Green Room aligns with the Club Lounge (also up to 30 people). The following table shows that Court Bushes is on average far cheaper than Adastra Hall (except for on a Friday and Saturday evening).

Adastra Hall, Hassocks Current Charges 2022/2023	Court Bushes Community Hub Current Charges 2022/2023	% age Difference
Main Hall: Weekday morning or afternoon session - £78.00 Weekday evening session – £78.00 Saturday evening session - £165.00	Function Room: Weekday morning or afternoon session - £37.40 Weekday evening session – £46.75 Saturday evening session - £65.45	52% 40% 60%
Green Room: Weekday morning session - £40.00 Weekday evening - £40.00 Friday evening - £40.00	Club Lounge: Weekday morning session - £29.10 Weekday evening - £36.40 Friday & Saturday evening - £50.95	27% 9% Plus 27%

With regards to the Court Bushes rates being so favourable, it is proposed that the fees are increased for Court Bushes Community Hub but only by 5%:

FUNCTION ROOM	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed Fee 2023/24	Proposed Affiliate Fee 2023/24
Base Fee (Plus 4%) Sunday-Friday Daytime (AM & PM)	£37.40	£39.30	£29.50
New Base Fee Plus 25%	£46.75	£49.15	36.90

Sunday to Thursday Evenings & Saturday Daytime (AM& PM)			
New Base Fee Plus 75% Friday and Saturday Evenings	£65.45	£68.80	51.60

The same approach to the Club Lounge would result in the hire fees as proposed below (with the 25% discount to be applied to affiliate hirers).

CLUB LOUNGE	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed Fee 2023/24	Proposed Affiliate Fee 2023/24
Base Fee (Plus 4%) Sunday-Friday Daytime (AM & PM)	£29.10	£30.60	23.00
New Base Fee Plus 25% Sunday to Thursday Evenings & Saturday Daytime (AM& PM)	£36.40	£38.25	28.70
New Base Fee Plus 75% Friday and Saturday Evenings	£50.95	£53.55	40.20

RECOMMENDATION 6 – To agree the Court Bushes base level charges of £39.30 for the Function Room and £30.60 for the Club Lounge.

There are other fees applied to the hire of Court Bushes, and these are outlined below:

COURT BUSHES ADDITIONAL FEES	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed 2023/24
Deposit (normal hire)	£50.00	£50.00
Deposit (party hire)	£200.00	£200.00
Locking up charge (Friday/Saturday evenings)	£35.00	£35.00
Crockery/Cutlery hire	£10.00	£10.00
Cage Hire Per Month	£8.00	£8.40
Container Ground Rent Per Month	£20.00	£20.00

There is one proposed change to the Court Bushes additional fees for 2023/24 which is the storage cage fee. The storage cage fee has been increased by 5% as it has not been increased in three years. The ground rent for the containers is not proposed to be increased as two of the payees are still in their first year.

A fee is charged to the Melting Pot Café for electricity and storage hire of £40 per month. With the increase in electricity costs but the reduction in the use of the venue by the café, it is proposed that there is no change to this fee for 2023/2024.

RECOMMENDATION 7 – No change to the Court Bushes additional fees for 2023/24 except for the storage cage fee which has been increased by 5% to £8.40 as it has not been increased in three years.

7. Village Centre

Village Centre Hall Hire

The Village Centre charging structure for room hire is for the Trustees to determine. Last year the following charging principles were agreed by the Trustees, i.e.

- Weekday daytime, Sunday daytime – base level
- Weekday evening, Saturday daytime, Sunday evening – base level plus 25%
- Friday/Saturday evening – base level plus 75%
- Affiliate Fees are a 25% reduction on the full fees.

The following proposed fees will be put to the Trustees at the 24 November 2022 Trustees meeting:

MAIN HALL	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed Fee 2023/24	Proposed Affiliate Fee 2023/24
Base Fee (Plus 5%) Sunday-Friday Daytime (AM & PM)	£37.40	£39.30	29.50
New Base Fee Plus 25% Sunday to Thursday Evenings & Saturday Daytime (AM& PM)	£46.75	£49.10	36.80
New Base Fee Plus 75% Friday Evenings	£65.45	£68.80	51.60
Main Hall & Conference Room on Saturday Nights (See Note 1)	£109.20	£114.65	86.00

Note 1 - The anomaly with the Main Hall is the existing requirement that if you hire it on a Saturday evening, the hire fee includes the use of the Conference Room (which is unavailable to hire on its own on a Saturday evening). The proposed fee for the Saturday evening is based on the charging principles of combining the Friday night fees for the main hall of £68.80 and the conference room fee of £45.85 = £114.55.

CONFERENCE ROOM	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed Fee 2023/24	Proposed Affiliate Fee 2023/24
Base Fee (Plus 5%) Sunday-Friday Daytime (AM & PM)	£24.95	£26.20	19.65
New Base Fee Plus 25% Sunday to Thursday Evenings & Saturday Daytime (AM& PM)	£31.20	£32.75	24.60
New Base Fee Plus 75% (See Note 2) Friday Evenings (Saturday Not Available)	£31.20	£45.85	34.40

Note 2 – In recent years the Friday evening fee for the Conference Room was reduced to base level plus 25% however, for next year it is proposed to revert to the base figure plus 75%.

CLUB SUITE	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed Fee 2023/24	Proposed Affiliate Fee 2023/24
Base Fee (Plus 5%) Sunday-Friday Daytime (AM & PM)	£29.10	£30.60	23.00
New Base Fee Plus 25% Sunday to Thursday Evenings & Saturday Daytime (AM& PM)	£36.40	£38.25	28.70
New Base Fee Plus 75% Friday and Saturday Evenings	£50.95	£53.55	40.20

Following the departure of the WSCC Children and Family Service from its base in the Village Centre, the hire of the small meeting room has come under the Village Centre management since its refurbishment in January 2022.

SMALL MEETING ROOM	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed Fee 2023/24	Proposed Affiliate Fee 2023/24
Base Fee (Plus 5%) Sunday-Friday Daytime (AM & PM)	20.80	21.90	16.40
New Base Fee Plus 25% Sunday to Thursday Evenings & Saturday Daytime (AM& PM)	26.00	27.40	20.55
New Base Fee Plus 75% Friday and Saturday Evenings	36.40	38.30	28.75

There are other fees applied to the hire of the Village Centre, and these are outlined below:

VILLAGE CENTRE ADDITIONAL FEES	Current Fee 2022/23	Proposed 2023/24
Deposit (normal hire)	£50.00	£50.00
Deposit (party hire)	£200.00	£200.00
Locking up charge (Friday/Saturday evenings)	£35.00	£35.00
Crockery/Cutlery hire	£10.00	£10.00
Cupboard hire – annual (used by 4 groups)	£20.00	21.00
Shed hire – monthly (The Sanctuary)	£8.00	£8.40
Storage – Hurstpierpoint Gym Club (annual)	£355	£372
Storage – Hurst Pre-School (annual)	£290	£304
Office Rent – Hurst Pre-School (termly)	£1000	£1050

Village Centre Management Re-charge

The Parish Council staff undertake work for the Village Centre and a cross charging arrangement is in place. This is based on 11 hours per week (5 for bookings, 3 for management and 3 for maintenance) at the average hourly total cost of staff members. Last year, the rate was increased by 4% in line with the principles agreed at the 23 September 2021 Council meeting. This year the annual national pay award from 1 April 2022 will be a one-off lump sum so no percentage increase can be applied. The assumptions agreed at Council on 20 October 2022 were for a sensitivity analysis be applied to increases on income. Therefore, in most cases a 5% increase has been applied to fees and charges to take effect from 1 April 2022, so the hourly rate has been increased by 5%. The proposed increase would result in a total cross charge for the year (assuming no change in the 11 hours per week) of £23.94 x 11 hours per week x 52 weeks = £13,694.

VILLAGE CENTRE	Current	Proposed 2023/24
Staff cross charging hourly rate	£22.80	£23.94

RECOMMENDATION 8 – To increase the staff cross charging hourly rate to £23.94 with effect from 1 April 2023.

8. Recommendation

The Parish Council’s fee structure is broken down into several categories, and each category has been examined above with proposed charges listed for consideration by the Committee along with the associated recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Committee AGREES the eight recommendations highlighted in blue throughout the report and recommends them to Council for adoption.