

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET1 December 2022Report by Director of EducationCHARGING FOR SERVICES 2023/2024**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 2023/2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Service Area 1 - Catering Service – School and Early Years Meals
To apply an inflationary uplift to the charge for a meal when accessing purchased Add-On sessions in early years and to increase charges within the primary and secondary sector by 20p per meal.
- Service Area 2 – Add On Sessions (Early Learning and Childcare)
To apply an inflationary uplift to all charges and introduce a 25% discount for any siblings accessing the service.
- Service Area 3 – Instrumental Music Service
To apply an inflationary uplift to charges for membership of choral groups and the Singing, Games and Rhymes programme
- Service Area 4 – Provision for Pupils with Additional Support Needs who reside out with the Authority
Revised charge to be set for 2023/24 following consideration of 2022/23 outturn.
- Service area 5 - School Transport – Privilege Place
To increase charges to £1.50 per journey and remove the current £2 per month admin fee.

IMPACT OF CHARGES FOR 2022/2023

3. Whilst availability and uptake of some chargeable services continued to be below pre-pandemic levels during the earlier part of this financial year, there has been an improving trend in terms of income projections since the start of the new academic session in August.

4. The main impacts on income levels to date this year are summarised below :-
- Whilst uptake of school meals within the secondary sector remains below pre-pandemic levels, the trend since schools returned in August has been favourable compared directly with last year (up around 8%) despite the 4% price increase applied from that point. Overall meal uptake in ERC across primary and secondary sectors compares very favourably against the national data with the latest School Healthy Living Survey statistics showing uptake of free and paid for meals at 80.4% in the primary sector (highest mainland Scotland) compared with a national average of 59.5%. For the secondary sector uptake is 51.9% (2nd highest mainland Scotland) compared to a national average of 35.9%.
 - To date there is no evidence that the increase in prices for ELC 'add-on' hours, both for those aged 3-5 and those aged under 3, has negatively impacted on demand for these services. The facility to purchase add-on sessions via the online ParentPay system has now been rolled out to all settings albeit remains subject to spaces/staffing ratio limitations.

DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES FOR CHARGING

5. 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 2023/2024

6. The services reviewed and recommendations for 2023/24 are summarised in the table below. Further information on each service area is available for scrutiny on request. Given current Scottish Government policy commitments around the removal of charges for Instrumental Music Tuition and services which support the core curriculum such as Easter Schools, no recommendations are included for these services.

7. Where relevant, inflationary uplifts have been applied using the corporately agreed inflation figures of 10.4% for 2022/23 and 12.3% for 2023/24, these rates reflecting a combination of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) and Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

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

9. In the table below, the following codes are used to denote the Charging Classification and Policy for 2023/2024 in respect of each service area:

- 10.

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 2022/2023	Proposed Charge 2023/2024	Charge Classification 2023/24	Charging Policy 2023/24	Recommendation
1. Catering Service – School and ELC Meals	Early Years – £3.00 Primary – £2.20 Secondary - £2.40	Early Years – £3.40 Primary – £2.40 Secondary - £2.60	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part costs (primary and secondary) and full cost (early years add-on)	To increase charges by inflation in early years and by 20p per meal in the primary and secondary sectors.
2. Add-On ELC Sessions (formerly known as wraparound)	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	Equivalent to the following rates per hour to access sessions available per setting :- 3-5 year olds - £3.40 2 year olds - £4.20 0-2 year olds - £5.00	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part cost	To increase charges by inflation from August 2023.
3. Instrumental Music Service	No charge for instrumental music per Scottish Government policy commitment; 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 : £85 Singing Games and Rhymes (P2 & P3) : £145 per year	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(b) Charge to recover part cost	To increase charges for Membership of choral groups and Singing, Games and Rhymes by inflation.
4. Provision for Pupils with Additional Support Needs outwith the authority	Annual charge per full time place :- Carlibar Communication Centre £21,676 Secondary Language & Communication Unit £20,996; Isobel Mair School £34,002 Isobel Mair Family Centre £23,319; Carlibar PSADU £14,067	Revised charge to be set for 2023/2024 following consideration of 2022/2023 outturn.	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(a) Charge to recover full cost	Revised charge to be set for 2023/2024 following consideration of 2022/2023 outturn.
5. School Transport – Privilege Place	£2.10 per day, £1.05 per single journey (plus admin fee of £2 per month)	£3.00 per day, £1.50 per single journey	(i) To accord with policy / strategy	(a) Charge to make a contribution to service revenue	To increase the charge per journey to £1.50 whilst removing the current £2 per month admin fee.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

11. As has been previously highlighted, current Scottish Government policy restricts the extent to which charges for services within education can be considered. 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

12. The proposed increase is made in the context of increasing staff and food costs as well as the scale of further savings required across council services. As noted above, uptake in school meals has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels and therefore the scale and timing of the recommended increase takes this into account as well as recognising prices have already been subject to a recent 4% increase. Changes in food regulations over recent years have also presented challenges in terms of finding compliant menu options which appeal to young people. A number of initiatives have been put in place recently to encourage young people to return to the service. These include taster sessions and wider pupil engagement which are already starting to have a positive impact on secondary uptake.

13. Given the wider cost of living impact on families across East Renfrewshire, the department and schools will seek to continue to offer support in terms of promoting the uptake of free school meals to eligible families and also consideration of any other support that can be offered to individual families experiencing particular financial hardship.

14. Whilst a 20p per meal increase is also proposed in the primary sector given the cost pressures noted above, this is likely to be superseded by the rollout of universal free school meals to the final stages for primary (P6 and P7) as noted in the Scottish Government's programme for Government 2022-23. However at this stage the implementation date for this has still to be confirmed. Additional Scottish Government funding to support this policy is expected.

Add On Sessions (Early Learning and Childcare)

15. An inflationary uplift is proposed given this service is offered as additionality to the statutory entitlement to 1,140 hours free early learning and childcare and the wider financial challenges faced by the council.

16. Whilst the charges recommended represent a significant increase the service remains considerably 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 funded providers in the private and voluntary sector.

17. In order to offer some support to families with more than one child accessing early years add-on, it is proposed to introduce a sibling discount of 25% from August 2023. This discount would be made available where both children are accessing a paid for, non-statutory place, with the discount being applied to the lower of the charges. In addition the Early Years Intervention Group is in place to help identify and support children and families who need our help most and can grant access to additional free early learning and childcare hours if deemed appropriate.

18. For session 2023/24, the Education Department will be looking to increase the level of flexibility available to families, with an increased ability to purchase additional hours where staffing capacity allows. We will look to make these available on a contractual basis to provide

families with greater certainty on their childcare arrangements to support family circumstances. This will continue to ensure that local authority provision remains attractive for families to access.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY

19. The impact of the proposal noted have been taken into account in the preparation of revenue budgets for 2023/24.

CONSULTATION

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

- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires that local authorities consult on ELC every 2 years and prepare a delivery plan in response to the consultation exercise. A consultation was carried out in October 2022, with a full report considered by elected members at Education Committee in November. A total of 73% of those responding indicated that they would like the option of being able to purchase additional hours to supplement their child's attendance at nursery.
- In terms of school meals, consultation with users takes place regularly to inform menu planning, marketing and service delivery. For example, all primary school pupils were consulted recently on areas such as menu compilation, sustainability and the dining experience. Once collated, the outcomes and targets following this consultation will be published on the Council website. Parent forums for early years and primary will take place in early 2023.
- Catering managers consult regularly with secondary pupils via Pupil Councils. Findings from a national survey of secondary pupils undertaken by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit are also being used to help shape the service going forward.

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Mark Ratter
Director of Education
1 December 2022

Convener Contact Details

Councillor Anderson, Convener for Education, Culture and Leisure
Tel: 07341 640 825
Tel: 0141 577 3107
Email: andrew.anderson@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

Report Author

Mary Docherty, Education Resources Senior Manager
Tel: 0414 577 3314
mary.docherty@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk