

**CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
Director – Caroline Holland



**Democracy Services  
London Borough of Merton  
Merton Civic Centre  
London Road  
Morden SM4 5DX**

**Direct Line: 0208 545 3357  
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***Date: 31 May 2022***

Dear Councillor

Notification of a Decision taken by the **Director of Community and Housing**

The attached **Key decision** has been taken by the **Director Community and Housing**, with regards to the **Library and Heritage Service Fees and Charges Review 2022/23** and will be implemented at **noon on Tuesday 7 June 2022** unless a call-in request is received.

The [call-in](#) form is attached for your use if needed and refers to the relevant sections of the constitution.

Yours sincerely

**Democracy Services**

## KEY DECISION TAKEN BY AN OFFICER UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

See over for instructions on how to use this form – all parts of this form must be completed. Type all information in the boxes. The boxes will expand to accommodate extra lines where needed.

**1. Title of report**

Library & Heritage Service Fees and Charges Review 2022/23

**2. Reason for exemption (if any)**

None

**3. Decision maker**

John Morgan – Director of Community & Housing

**4. Date of Decision**

31 May 2022

**5. Date report made available to decision maker**

20 May 2022

**6. Decision**

Approved

**7. Reason for decision**

Review will improve access to libraries and ensure that income targets are achieved. New charges to be implemented from Monday 13 June 2022.

**8. Alternative options considered and why rejected**

Included within report.


**9. Documents relied on in addition to officer report**

N/A

**10. Declarations of Interest**

None

**11. Signature**

Signature  Date 31/05/2022

**12. Publication of this decision and call in provision**

Send this form and the officer report to [democratic.services@merton.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@merton.gov.uk) for publication. Publication will take place within two days. The call-in deadline will be at Noon on the third working day following publication.

## **Committee: Chief Officer (key decision)**

**Date: 31 May 2022**

Wards: All

## **Subject: Library & Heritage Service Fees & Charges Review 2022/23**

Lead officer: John Morgan – Director of Community & Housing

Lead member: Councillor Brenda Fraser - Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Skills

Contact officer: Anthony Hopkins – Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Service

### **Recommendations:**

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1. That the proposed changes as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report are accepted.
  2. That the changes are implemented from 13 June 2022.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. An annual review of Merton libraries fees and charges is undertaken to ensure the charges are in line with inflation and are benchmarked against neighbouring authorities.
- 1.2. It is the recommendation of this paper and detailed in Appendix 1 that some fees and charges are increased; some are reduced, and some services withdrawn. Where charges are recommended to be increased these are to reflect increased supply costs or because of benchmarking analysis. Where services are to be withdrawn this is to reflect the changing technological environment we work in and subsequent lack of demand. (e.g., withdrawal of postal services). Some charges are also proposed to be reduced to also reflect the bench marking work undertaken and to further increase usage amongst children and young people of libraries.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. The local authority's power to raise charges relating to library services is laid out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. It is stipulated that the lending of books and access to information must be offered free at the point of delivery to people living, working and/or studying within the borough. For other or extended services fees and charges may be imposed.
- 2.2. The purpose of imposing fees and charges is not solely related to income generation – they can act as an encouragement to ensure borrowed items are returned on time to be available to other users, and they can help to offset the cost of new services particularly where these have been introduced within existing funding. Maximising the service's funding falls within the remit of providing value for money.

- 2.3. As outlined in Appendix 1 some fees and charges are proposed to be increased in 2022/23 and some decreased or withdrawn.
- 2.4. One of the proposals is to withdraw fines for children and young people as the vast majority of children and young people attend Merton schools and as part of the Schools and Libraries Membership Scheme, they do not pay fines. Very little in the way of fines are collected and this amendment is in place so that children, regardless of where they go to school, are treated equally.
- 2.5. Another proposal is to change hireable spaces to variable rates to reflect the size and facilities available for hire based on a recent review and to reflect benchmarking with neighbouring authorities along with increased operating costs. The proposal is to either reduce or maintain fees in the east of the borough to make the spaces more affordable and to offer multiple room discounts. We also propose to apply discounts for multiple bookings as well as continuing concessions for voluntary groups, residents' associations, and statutory bodies.
- 2.6. The postal service for overdue notifications has been withdrawn and is no longer available but the library system platform (LSP) including a new library website is supporting customers to avoid paying overdue charges. Additional measures to reduce customers paying overdue charges include pre-overdue notifications that can be sent via e-mail or text message. The new libraries customer app gives customers more choice to renew items and complete other transactions.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. **Maintain fees and charges.** This would be beneficial to customers where price increases are proposed but would have a detrimental impact on the libraries budget due to increased operating costs. Some charges are also proposed to be reduced in this year's proposals and where this is applicable customers will benefit. The proposals included ensure a balanced budget whilst also addressing access issues amongst certain groups.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. Satisfaction with library services is measured via the Annual Residents Survey. A detailed user survey is conducted every 3 years to gain customers views on the Library & Heritage Service. Any significant changes to service delivery are consulted on via a range of communication channels.
- 4.2. Comments, complaints and compliments from customers relating to fees and charges were considered when preparing this report. No complaints relating to this were received in the last year.

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. New fees and charges, as recommended in this paper, are to be implemented from 13 June 2022. Public communication will be undertaken prior to the charges going live to raise awareness amongst the community.

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. Appendix 1 sets out the new charges for 2022/23. The proposals will ensure that the service achieves a balanced budget whilst maintaining fees and charges at a comparable level to other boroughs. The proposals also seek to increase usage of libraries and their hireable spaces.

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The relevant legislation to the imposition of charges is the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (The Act) and the Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations 1991/2712 (The Regulations).
- 7.2. Section 7(1) of the Act imposes a duty on a library authority to make facilities for the borrowing of books and other materials available to those who live or whose place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full-time education within that area.
- 7.3. Under Section 8(2) of the Act, the Secretary of State may by regulations specify charges libraries can make.
- 7.4. However, Section 8 (3) of the Act prohibits charging for lending any written material - (S8(7) of the Act defines written material as book, journal, pamphlet or other similar article) where the authority is lending written material to any person:
- (i) who is owed a duty by the authority under S7(1);
  - (ii) where the material is lent in the course of providing such facilities to that person on any library premises;
  - (iii) where the material is lent in a form in which it can be read without the use of any electronic or other apparatus; and
  - (iv) where that person is not a person who has required such apparatus to be used or made available to them for putting the material into such a form in order that they can borrow it.

S8(4) of the Act prohibits charging for the use of written reference material which is readable without the use of any electronic or other apparatus or in microform. Charges can also not be made for consulting catalogues, indexes or similar articles as are maintained, in whatever form they are kept, exclusively for the purpose of the authority's public library service.

- 7.5. The Secretary of State has specified in paragraph 3 in the Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations 1991/2712 what can be charged for. The proposed fees and charges in Appendix 1 to this report are charges permitted by the Regulations.
- 7.6. Paragraph 4(1) of the Regulations relate to the amount and incidence of the charges. Under Paragraph 4 (1) of the Regulations, the amount that can be charged is at the discretion of the authority. Paragraph 4(2) of the Regulations also enables an authority to:

- (i) make different provisions for different cases including different provision in relation to different persons, circumstances or localities; and
- (ii) make charges in respect of each use of the library facilities made available by it or charge an annual subscription or a deposit in respect of all or some of such facilities.

7.7 Paragraph 5 of the Regulations states that the authority shall display in a conspicuous place within each library premises a notice which has the charges displayed on it.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. No issues identified as part of this report.

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. No issues identified as part of this report.

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. Risks relate to the user's willingness to pay the charge and their decision on whether to use the service. Raising the charges too high will lead to a decline in use, which is counterproductive. However, a subsidised service (e.g. for British Library items) could lead to high expenditure commitments on the part of the service and costs are imposed to reflect the cost incurred by providing each service.

10.2. A risk management plan is maintained by the Library & Heritage Service. No health and safety implications have been identified in this report.

## **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- Appendix 1 – Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. None included.

## APPENDIX 1: PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2022/23

	Current Charges	Proposed 22/23	Comments
<b>OVERDUE CHARGES</b>			
Adult books	27p per day	27p per day	No change
Magazines	27p per day	27p per day	No change
CDs, 3-week loan DVDs, videos	27p per day	27p per day	No change
Talking books (spoken word)	27p per day	27p per day	No change
Children's and teenage books / tapes (0-17)	7p per day	No charge	Proposed change as the vast majority of children and young people attend Merton schools and as part of the Schools and Libraries Membership Scheme they do not pay fines. Very little in the way of fines are collected and this amendment is in place so that children, regardless of where they go to school, are treated equally.
DVDs	Full rental charge (50p - £2.50)	Full rental charge (50p - £2.50)	No change
<b>LOST ITEMS</b>			
Lost ticket replacement	£3	£3	No change
Stock (in print)	Replacement cost (plus 10% admin charge)	Replacement cost (plus 10% admin charge)	No change
Stock (out of print)	Replacement cost (plus 10% admin charge)	Replacement cost (plus 10% admin charge)	No change
<b>RESERVATIONS</b>			
Standard reservation (adults)	£1.30 for postal notification, 60p for web reservation, no postage	60p	Postal service no longer available.
Standard reservation (children and young people under the age of 18)	No charge (limited to 2 free reservations placed at one time)	No charge (limited to 2 free reservations placed at one time)	No change
Items supplied by libraries outside Merton via Interloans System	£6.00 plus standard reservation charge	£6.00 plus standard reservation charge	No change
Items and articles supplied via British Library	£14.30 per item plus standard reservation charge	£14.30 per item plus standard reservation charge	No change
<b>PEOPLE'S NETWORK</b>			
Use of computers	No charge	No charge	No change
Computer Printouts (b/w A4)	15p	15p	No change
Computer Printouts (colour A4)	50p	50p	No change
Computer printouts (b/w A3)	30p	30p	No change
Computer printouts (colour A3)	£1	£1	No change
<b>PHOTOCOPYING</b>			
A4 b/w	10p	15p	Proposed change to reflect the same price as printing.
A3 b/w	20p	30p	
A4 colour	50p	50p	
A3 colour	£1	£1	
<b>ADVERTISING</b>			
Via internal boards	£3 per week	£3 per week	No change

<b>SPACE HIRE</b>			
<p>All libraries (where hall space is available)</p>	<p>£22 per hour (£32 out of hours, minimum 2 hour booking)            Sunday £42 per hour  <i>20% concession for voluntary groups, residents' associations and statutory bodies.</i></p>	<p>£23 per hour (£33 out of hours, minimum 2-hour booking)            Sunday £43 per hour</p> <p>Raynes Park library hall:            £30 per hour (£40 out of hours, minimum 2-hour booking)            Sunday £50 per hour</p> <p>Colliers Wood:            Meeting Room 1: £15 per hour (single room hire not available out of hours)            Meeting Room 2: £15 per hour (single room hire not available out of hours)            Meeting Room 3: £23 per hour (single room hire not available out of hours)            Meeting room 1, 2 and 3 combined:            £30 per hour (£40 out of hours, minimum 2-hour booking)            Sunday £50 per hour</p> <p><i>20% concession for voluntary groups, residents' associations, and statutory bodies. 5% discount for block bookings of 5 or more, 10% discount for block bookings of 10 or more.</i></p>	<p>Proposed change to variable rates to reflect the size and facilities available for hire based on a recent review and to reflect benchmarking with neighbouring authorities along with increased operating costs.</p>
<p>Merton Arts Spaces</p>	<p>Main space Wimbledon library (only available out of library opening hours):            £75 per hour            Exhibition Room 1: £23 per hour (£33 out of hours, minimum 2 hour booking);            Sunday £43 per hour            Exhibition Room 2: £23 per hour (£33 out of hours, minimum 2 hour booking);            Sunday £43 per hour            Arts Space at Mitcham Library            £23 per hour (£33 out of hours, minimum 2 hour booking); Sunday £43 per hour  <i>20% concession for voluntary groups, residents' associations and statutory bodies.</i></p>	<p>Main space Wimbledon library (only available out of library opening hours):            £80 per hour, £90 per hour on Sunday's            Exhibition Room 1: £23 per hour (£33 out of hours, minimum 2-hour booking);            Sunday £43 per hour            Exhibition Room 2: £23 per hour (£33 out of hours, minimum 2-hour booking);            Sunday £43 per hour            Exhibition Room 1 and 2: £34.50 per hour (44.50 out of hours, minimum 2-hour booking), £54.50 Sunday's</p> <p>Arts Space at Mitcham Library            £23 per hour (£33 out of hours, minimum 2-hour booking); Sunday £43 per hour  <i>20% concession for voluntary groups,</i></p>	<p>Proposed change of variable rates to reflect the size and facilities available for hire based on a recent review and to reflect benchmarking with neighbouring authorities along with increased operating costs.</p>



		<i>residents' associations and statutory bodies.5% discount for block bookings of 5 or more, 10% discount for block</i>	
<b>LOAN CHARGES</b>			
Projector hire	£15 per session	£15 per session	No change
Microphone / PA hire	£15 per session	£15 per session	No change
CDs	£1.50	£1.50	No change
CD sets	£2.50	£2.50	No change
Talking books (spoken word)	£1.50	£1.50	No change
Language courses	£1.50	£1.50	No change
Language courses (12 week loan)	£10	£10	No change
DVDs	50p - £2.50	50p-£2.50	No change
<b>HERITAGE AND LOCAL STUDIES CHARGES</b>			
Enquiries under 15 minutes	Free	Free	No change
Research	£20 per half hour	£20 per half hour	No change
Photocopies	A4 10p A3 20p A4 25p (from microfilm / fiche printer) A3 50p (from microfilm / fiche printer)	A4 10p A3 20p A4 25p (from microfilm / fiche printer) A3 50p (from microfilm / fiche printer)	No change
LSC photo scanning (sent as e-mail attachment)	£6 - £15 (depending on amount and size)	£6 - £15 (depending on amount and size)	No change
Merton Memories website prints	£11.50 for 4"x6" print (plus £3.50 P&P) £14.50 for a 10"x8" print (plus £3.50 P&P) Each additional print in an order will incur a £1 postage and packaging charge.	£11.50 for 4"x6" print (plus £3.50 P&P) £14.50 for a 10"x8" print (plus £3.50 P&P) Each additional print in an order will incur a £1 postage and packaging charge.	No change
<b>OTHER</b>			
Food waste bags	£2.50	£2.75	Proposed change to reflect supply charge increases
Pencil	10p	10p	No change
Biro (blue / black)	15p	15p	No change
A4 brown envelopes	40p	40p	No change
A4 plain paper	5p (or 20p for 5 sheets)	5p (or 20p for 5 sheets)	No change
A4 plastic sleeve	20p	20p	No change
A4 plastic sleeve with punched pocket	20p	20p	No change
<b>COMMERCIAL SERVICES</b>			
Promotional space	£20 per hour or £50 to £60 per day (depending upon library).	£10 per hour or £50 per day	Proposed change to reflect the recent review of hireable space.
Advertising on Merton Library Plasma screens	All libraries £10 per week per advertising slide.	All libraries £10 per week per advertising slide.	No change

Poster board and leaflet displays	£10 per week for displaying A3 posters and £7 per week for displaying A4/5 leaflets	£10 per week for displaying A3 posters and £7 per week for displaying A4/5 leaflets	No change
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**Concessions in charging**

Visually impaired adults and over 60's: free borrowing of talking books but fines apply.

Visually impaired teens: free borrowing of talking books but fines apply.

Visually impaired children: free borrowing of children's talking books, but fines apply.

Visually impaired adults: free borrowing of CD's.

## Merton Council - call-in request form

### 1. Decision to be called in: (required)

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### 2. Which of the principles of decision making in Article 13 of the constitution has not been applied? (required)

Required by part 4E Section 16(c)(a)(ii) of the constitution - tick all that apply:

(a) proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome);	
(b) due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers;	
(c) respect for human rights and equalities;	
(d) a presumption in favour of openness;	
(e) clarity of aims and desired outcomes;	
(f) consideration and evaluation of alternatives;	
(g) irrelevant matters must be ignored.	

### 3. Desired outcome

Part 4E Section 16(f) of the constitution- select one:

(a) The Panel/Commission to refer the decision back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.	
(b) To refer the matter to full Council where the Commission/Panel determines that the decision is contrary to the Policy and/or Budget Framework	
(c) The Panel/Commission to decide not to refer the matter back to the decision making person or body *	
* If you select (c) please explain the purpose of calling in the decision.	

**4. Evidence which demonstrates the alleged breach(es) indicated in 2 above (required)**

Required by part 4E Section 16(c)(a)(ii) of the constitution:

**5. Documents requested**

**6. Witnesses requested**

**7. Signed (not required if sent by email): .....**

**8. Notes – see part 4E section 16 of the constitution**

Call-ins must be supported by at least three members of the Council.

The call in form and supporting requests must be received by 12 Noon on the third working day following the publication of the decision.

The form and/or supporting requests must be sent:

- **EITHER** by email from a Councillor’s email account (no signature required) to [democratic.services@merton.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@merton.gov.uk)
- **OR** as a signed paper copy to the Head of Democracy and Electoral Services, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX.

For further information or advice contact the Head of Democracy and Electoral Services on 020 8545 3409