

Committee: Council

Date: Tuesday, 22
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Title: Fees and Charges Update

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Lead Member: Cllr Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Finance
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Summary

1. Since the 2025/26 fees and charges were approved at Council on 25 February 2025 there has been legislation allowing three new charges. In addition, a review of the council owned allotments has identified the need for revised charging.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Council:
 - a. Approve the additional fee of £18 for the official reduced checks that are required for low-risk Products Of Animal Origin (POAO) at the Border Control Post (BCP) Stansted Airport.
 - b. Approve an additional fee of £16 for consultation emails with importers where more information is required to secure clearance of POAO.
 - c. Increase the annual allotment rental fee from the current charge of 12p per square metre up to 24p per square metre for 2025/26 and then to 30p per square metre from 2026/27.
 - d. Introduce a paid service, delivered by Essex Place Services, with administration by UDC, to appropriately research and consider queries around the formal listed status of buildings in the curtilage of listed buildings. This will be at cost (bespoke fee).
 - e. All charges to commence from 23 April 2025

Financial Implications

3. The local authority is required to review its fees and charges as part of the annual budget setting process. In accordance with legislation and guidance, it is appropriate for fees and charges associated with the import service managed and implemented by the Council to reflect the cost incurred. The requirement to apply these charges is set down in *Article 82 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council*.

Whilst the council is not permitted to operate in such a way to generate a profit from the official controls undertaken, the service cannot run at a loss.

Due to changing import controls following EU exit, the imports service provided by UDC, is currently adjusting to respond to an unpredictable and changing international trade pattern as new rules become embedded. It may be necessary to request periodic amendments to the current pricing structure outside of the annual review to ensure that costs remain appropriate and recoverable during this time.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author

Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

[CL2017R0625EN0000010.0001_cp 1..1](#)

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Fees and charges will be published on the website and existing allotment holders informed of the revised charges.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

Imported Food

5. This report outlines the requirements for an additional fee of £18 for the required checks of low risk POAO by UDC and their nominated official veterinarians at Stansted BCP. UDC are responsible for ensuring that the BCP is operating within the requirements of current legislation, including The Trade in Animal and related Product Regulations 2011, The Official Food and Feed Regulations 2009 and The Official Control Regulations 2017.

The BCP is approved for ambient products which are for human consumption along with chilled, frozen and ambient products not for human consumption.

Officers and official veterinarians acting on behalf of UDC process over 2000 shipments of POAO within a 12 month period.

The requirements to undertake these tasks and apply cost recovery fees can be found in Articles 79 -82 of *Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council*.

[CL2017R0625EN0000010.0001_cp 1..1](#)

Fees and charges are calculated by means of a time study on each of the official controls and associated works that are undertaken, the officer's hourly rate is then used to calculate the fee for each associated task / official control. Other associated costs such as consumables, training, equipment, telephones and internet access are also used to reflect an accurate costing

6. The additional £18 fee proposed reflects the need for a charge supporting the reduced checking regime applicable for lower risk products. Such products are generally subject to automatic clearance but are monitored by officers and a full document /identity check can be required if determined appropriate by random dip sampling. The charge will recover the costs incurred and facilitate the flow of trade for low-risk consignments arriving at Stansted from outside GB, while managing risk appropriately.
7. The proposed additional fee of £16 covers time spent to obtain further information from the importer / agent to allow release of consignments subject to official controls. While the majority of consignments are presented with the correct information, some are not and in order to secure clearance, contact is made with importers. The cost of this time is not fully recovered within the existing fee structure. Consignments failing to secure appropriate documentation after such action are rejected or returned to the importer.

Allotments

8. UDC owns 60 allotments, all of which are on HRA land. The current charge is among the lowest in Essex and this has not been reviewed since 2019. The current average annual charge is £20.10 per allotment. It is proposed to increase the annual fee from the current charge of 12p per square metre up to 24p per square metre for 2025/26 and then to 30p per square metre from 2026/27. The average impact on allotment holders will be an increase of £20.10 per year in 2025-6, and then an average additional amount of £5.03 per year in 2026-7. The maximum increase for 2025/26 will be £42.00 per year. The lowest increase will be £12.00.
9. The council recognises the benefits which allotments can bring, not only as part of its climate change agenda but also as a cheap way to access healthy food. There are also known mental and physical health benefits to working an allotment, alongside the social/community benefit. We wish to maximise the number of people who have access to an allotment.

10. There are 45 people on the waiting list. Currently 11 lessees are not maintaining their plots and the council is using resource in chasing the lessees to either start using their plots or to hand the plots back. Increasing the cost will help incentivise lessees who are not maintaining their plots to take some action. The new annual total income to the Council if all charges were increased by the recommended amount would be £2,412.00 per annum in 2025/26, compared to the current income of £1206.00.

Planning (Listed Buildings)

11. Due to the recent, national, changes in Land Charges and its relationship with Land Registry, the Planning Team is receiving increasing 'point of sale' queries regarding whether buildings within the curtilage of listed buildings, are identified as 'curtilage listed'. Identifying a building as curtilage listed can have ramifications for the homeowner. If a building is identified as curtilage listed then listed building consent for any works to it. This will include works already carried out (retrospective consent).
12. The queries require research and access to Essex Historic Records. The planning team has developed a process with Essex Place Services (EPS) to provide this service for the council, with payment directly to EPS. This would be signposted via the Council's website. UDC remains the appropriate authority to provide the formal decision. Bespoke charges will be charged by EPS and the service will be launched during Q1. It is considered that an administration charge (up to 10%) will be added to recoup the Council's reasonable costs of the administration. This service will be zero cost for Council and will not generate income (simply cost recovery).
13. If no fee is charged the research would have to be funded from the general planning service budget.