

Extraordinary, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14th February 2024

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CTS0004- Review Charging Policy for Assistive Technology

Technology to assist people at home

We provide helpful devices such as alarms and sensors for the safety of people who need them in their homes. We call these devices 'assistive technology'.

Devices such as safety sensors and alarms have to be monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What we're proposing

Starting on 1 April 2024, we're proposing to charge a **small weekly fee for our assistive technology monitoring service**.

The devices themselves will remain free to residents if they cost under £1,000.

Why we believe it's necessary

The fee would help us manage our costs better so we can keep providing this important service and maintain the high quality necessary. It won't change how the service works for you.

Your weekly charge would depend on your financial situation. We will carry out a means test to check your finances, after which you might pay all, some, or none of the cost.

There were 28 responses to the proposed changes. Several respondents addressed more than one area in their responses, which are categorised by type in Table 1 below.

Category	Number of Responses
Positive	3
Negative	13
Positive/Negative	9
Neutral	4
Not related to Technology to assist	X
Response not specific enough to categorise	x
Total	29

The primary themes emerging from the responses are summarised below:

Area	Summary of Responses
Assistive Technology	Dissatisfaction with cost increase for assistive technology
Assistive Technology	Fees should be paid by users of the service and not taken out of council tax
Assistive Technology	Concerns raised about the lack of detailed cost information in the Council's proposal for cost for assistive technology.
Other	Dissatisfaction with wider financial position
Other	The right decision should be made by the council in choosing the right technology. Dissatisfied with solar power technology investment

CTS0209- Parks and Open Spaces**

Parks and open spaces

We regularly maintain Thurrock's parks and open spaces.

What we're proposing

We're proposing to **cut the grass in parks and open spaces less often, changing from every 3 weeks to every 5 weeks or 6 weeks.**

We also want to host more events such as music festivals and funfairs in these areas.

Why we believe it's necessary

We need to save money for other important community services. By cutting the grass less often, we can save on fuel and maintenance costs.

Hosting events could bring in extra money, helping us care for the parks while keeping most of them free to use.

There were 91 responses to the proposed changes. Several respondents addressed more than one area in their responses, which are categorised by type below.

Category	Number of Responses
Positive	4
Negative	38
Positive/Negative	6
Neutral	31
Not related to Parks & Open Spaces	10
Response not specific enough to categorise	2
Total	91

The primary themes emerging from the responses are summarised below:

Area	Summary of Responses
Grass cutting	Disagreement with the length increasing between cuts as there will be an increased risk of vermin, therefore making it unsafe for residents, particularly children. There is a concern around the amount of dog excretion as it will be harder to find and pick up, causing smelly parks and open spaces. There will also be less opportunities for events where open spaces will not be fit for purpose
Events	Disagreement as Thurrock are lowering the number of opportunities to organise events due to the lack of suitable areas available. Decrease in parks & open spaces maintenance will mean that areas will be left to overgrow, making the borough look untidy.
Health & Well-being	Disagreement as not having suitable parks and open spaces for residents who do not have homes with gardens do not have public places to go to that look presentable. This can have a negative impact

	on resident's health and well-being as they are reluctant to go out in these areas.
Parks & Open Spaces	Disagreement with the proposal as there was already poor maintenance of parks and open spaces prior to this consultation. The current level of maintenance that should be provided is not being done and residents disagree with the further cuts that are being proposed.

CTS0217- Home to School Transport - Review policy and routes to secure improved value for money and CTS0226- Home to School Transport - Policy update and post 16 charging policy

Home to school travel assistance

We provide home to school and college travel assistance for students who are eligible.

The law doesn't require us to offer free home to school travel assistance for students aged 16 years-old to 18 years-old with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), but we've not been charging for the service.

What we're proposing

We're proposing to introduce **a fee for home to school travel assistance for students aged 16 years-old to 18 years-old with SEND.**

If the proposals are agreed, the fee will be introduced ahead of the school year that starts from September 2024.

Why we believe it's necessary

The fee would make sure we can keep providing this important service. We believe it's necessary due to rising demand.

It will help us to continue offering travel assistance, while making sure everyone has the chance to attend school.

There were 50 responses to the proposed changes. Several respondents addressed more than one area in their responses, which are categorised below.

Category	Number of Responses
Positive	8
Negative	35
Positive/Negative	0
Neutral	5
Not related to Home to school transport	0
Response not specific enough to categorise	2
Total	50

The primary themes emerging from the responses are summarised below:

Area	Summary of Responses
Taxis & minibuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain the current service. Provide suitable transport on unsafe routes. children transported by taxi; walking/cycling could be considered. Provide suitable transport links around the borough.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stopping school transport for SEND children can harm children who do not like crowded buses or attending school. Home to school transport is important for the safety and wellbeing of those who need it.
<p>Post-16 contribution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider Means testing or minimal contribution. • Lack of information on level of fee • Those who are eligible should receive home to school transport at no cost to the family. • Users of the service should pay for the service • Impact of pupil attendance at Post-16 provision where families have to pay for transport.
<p>Both proposals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel they should continue to get free transport. Affordability. • Agree with proposals • Walking to school has health benefits • Concern this proposal affects families of some of the most vulnerable in the Borough. • Parents feel they only have two options where they choose a school outside the local area. A subsidy should be given for specialised transport. • Consider cases on an individual basis. Consider SEND and transport costs to get to school. • Eligibility for all transport - all parents should pay or no payment at all • Most parents are able to get their child to school. Some have two cars, but transport provided is free.

CTS0055- Fees and Charges

What we're proposing

We're proposing **changes to our fees and charges for the 12 months from 1 April 2024.**

Proposed changes include increased penalty charges for offences such as fly-tipping and littering.

We're also proposing increases to fees for outdoor sports, open spaces, professional dog walking, theatre hire, and burial and memorial services.

Why we believe it's necessary

The main reason for these changes is to make sure our services don't cost more money than we collect. Some prices have changed because of new laws.

The cost of providing services is rising because of the UK's rate of inflation. We need extra income so we can keep offering good services.

We want to keep our community clean, safe, and enjoyable for everyone.

There were 72 responses to the proposed changes. Several respondents addressed more than one area in their responses, which are categorised below.

Category	Number of Responses
Positive	1
Negative	41
Positive/Negative	11
Neutral	1
Not related to Fees & Charges	12
Response not specific enough to categorise	6
Total	72

The primary themes emerging from the responses are summarised below:

Area	Summary of Responses
Fly Tipping/Littering	Positive responses to increasing the charges for fly tipping and littering, to reduce the level of offences. There were concerns that the proposed reduction in waste collection will encourage fly tipping, but that there may be insufficient resources to apprehend the offenders.
Burials Fees	Strong disagreement with increasing in burial fees.
Waste Collection/Brown Bins	Disagreement with the proposed introduction of a charge for brown bins, while reducing the waste collection to every two weeks. An additional concern was the restriction on the number of visits allowed to the local tip.
Outdoor Sports and Open Spaces	Disagreement with increased charges for Outdoor Sport and Open Spaces, as it may adversely impact on promoting good health and wellbeing.

Parking	Disagreement with the introduction of additional Resident Parking Permit fees, and the removal of a certain number of free visitors permits.
Service levels	Disagreement with increasing charges, while having reduced or poor service levels
Overall increases to fees and charges	Disagreement with increasing charges. Reasons given included that there were significant increases in 2023-24, residents cannot afford additional increases, the council should reduce expenditure, and that there is no justification for increases.

Traffic orders and notices

Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO) and Temporary Traffic Regulation Notices (TTRN) are the way that, by law, councils can enforce temporary controls on traffic for reasons such as roadworks, public events or emergency situations.

We work to make sure roadworks are well managed and traffic can flow as smoothly as possible. Safety on our roads is very important to us.

What we're proposing

Starting on 1 April 2024, we're proposing that **the fee for a TTRO should increase to £1,800**. The fee for a TTRN will remain at £880.

Usually these fees are paid by companies that do the work, which means residents do not have to pay. If you're a street works promoter and need to apply for a TTRO or TTRN, these fees will apply to you.

If you're [organising a charity event](#) and need to close a road, you won't have to pay a fee as a different law applies.

Why we believe it's necessary

The fees help cover the work we do, such as preparing the formal documents needed by law and informing the public.

There were 37 responses to the proposed changes. Several respondents addressed more than one area in their responses, which are categorised below.

Category	Number of Responses
Positive	8
Negative	21
Positive/Negative	1
Neutral	7
Not related to Traffic Orders & Notices	5
Response not specific enough to categorise	0
Total	37

The primary themes emerging from the responses are summarised below:

Area	Summary of Responses
Disapprove/Disapprove strongly with proposal	Law abiding citizens should not be expected to pay or be penalised. Seen as money making opportunity for council at the expense of the motorist who are constantly targeted and seen as endless cash cow. Should not be funded by Council tax increases, already too high for average earner. Regressive stealth tax on people movement and cars, does not align with some political ideals. Further example of mismanagement of funds.

Agree to proposal	Agree with the proposal and think it would improve safety on the roads and in communities. Reducing disruptions. Reasonable proposal.
Agree to proposal with caveats	Businesses should pay for RTO's and fines where work is not completed on time, this could enable essential council services to continue to be provided.
Scheduled repair works and maintenance	Repairs and scheduled maintenance work should be prioritised, scheduled with clear start and end dates in place. Public does not feel like works are being carried out in a timely manner, managed successfully. Communication with residents needs to be improved.
Penalties	If repairs or maintenance works are not completed on time, penalty costs should be applicable to charge agencies, utility companies where work is not completed on time or is not managed correctly, and rework is required. E.g. Another utility provided comes along later dig up the road again, causing further disruption and delays. Charges should be higher where there has been delays but third parties removing temporary traffic lights or road closure/diversion signs as this causes unnecessary disruption and inconvenience.
Management & Communications	Council should align works, communications with resident's agencies/third party utility companies to ensure smooth operation and completion of any repairs or maintenance works conducted.

CTS0136- Waste Collections

We collect waste and recycling from every household in the borough.

Our current arrangement for collections is as follows.

Bin	Waste	Collection
Green/grey bin	Non-recyclable and food waste	Collected once a week
Blue bin	Recyclable waste	Collected on alternate weeks
Brown bin	Garden waste	Collected on alternate weeks

What we're proposing

During the year from April 2024, we're proposing to introduce the following new arrangements.

Bin	Waste	Collection
Green/grey bin	Non-recyclable waste	Collected on alternate weeks
Blue bin	Recyclable waste	Collected on alternate weeks
Brown bin	Garden waste	An optional service at a charge of £80 per year for collections on alternate weeks
Food bin	Food waste	Collected once a week from new smaller food bins that we'll provide to all households

We're also proposing to change our collection rounds to make them more efficient. This means **during the year from April 2024 your regular bin collections may be on a different day of the week.**

We will collect green/grey bins one week, blue bins the next, and so on, alternating every 2 weeks throughout the year.

The only service we're proposing to make optional for a charge is garden waste collections. All other types of bin collection will remain free services to all households.

Why we believe it's necessary

We believe these changes will help us provide a reliable service, manage costs, become more efficient and make sure we can continue to offer a garden waste collection service for those who need it.

There were 363 responses to the proposed changes.

The primary themes emerging from the responses are summarised below:

Area	Summary of Responses
Fortnightly Collections	<p>Strong disagreement with a switch to fortnightly collections, based on a number of factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential for an increase in rubbish accumulation. • The encouragement of vermin and an unhealthy, unhygienic environment. • The potential for an increase in fly-tipping. • The bins are too small for larger families. • The scheme discourages recycling meaning waste will be disposed of incorrectly. <p>Concern raised over the shared sheltered housing bins being too small for fortnightly collections.</p> <p>Some consider this to be a reduction in service which is already considered unreliable.</p> <p>Some concern raised over the management and cost of getting rid of excess rubbish e.g. fly-tipping and garden bonfires.</p>
Garden Waste Charges	<p>Garden waste charges are considered to be too high (especially compared to neighbouring councils) or should not be charged at all. Concerns were also raised about disposal if not participating in the scheme or collections not being frequent enough. General disagreement to charging given the increases to council tax and the service should be included.</p> <p>Some support for garden waste charges but need to guarantee the service.</p>
Food Waste	<p>Some suggestions that a separate food waste collection service should not be provided to save money on food caddies.</p>
Alternative Schedules	<p>Some alternative schedules were suggested: blue bins weekly, green bins bi-weekly, brown bins monthly. The garden waste service should be all year round or increase the blue bin collection during the winter. Waste and recycling should go back to weekly and have bi-weekly garden collections for a fee.</p>
Positive Support for Proposal	<p>There was some support for the proposal as it is in line with other councils. Some support for fortnightly collections and happy to pay extra for garden waste but needs a reliable service. Would pay more for more frequent and reliable collections.</p>
HWRC	<p>More trips to the HWRC are expected as a result but there is no queue management. Suggestion for relocation with improved access.</p>