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London Borough of Hounslow
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Your contact is: Stefania Horne
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Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Date: 5 February 2021

Dear Allotment Holder,

From out to consultation on the Council's allotment strategy ("Strategy"). The consultation included an online questionnaire run between 19th May to 23rd June 2020, to assess whether the strategy compiled between 2019/20 has reflected the feedback we obtained through a seminar, interviews, focus groups and surveys to which you might have participated. You can find the outcome of the consultation and the Strategy on our website

https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20168/parks_and_open_spaces/1558/allotments

The Strategy is ambitious and aims to improve facilities and invest in the service with a number of interventions that hopefully will also improve accessibility and your experience of allotments. We already progressed some of the actions including the introduction of micro gardens to increase access for people in flats, a compostable toilet pilot scheme and infrastructure improvements in some allotments.

The consultation results showed that the Strategy had overwhelming support (over 91% of respondent agreed with the vision) and there was consensus that the Council and GS360 had limited resources and that an increase of the fees and charges would be one way to help to implement the planned improvements. With the new Strategy we also very much hope that this will also lead to other investment such as through the Community Infrastructure Levy known as CIL.

A review of the fees and charges involved a comparison with other London Boroughs. It identified that the London Borough of Hounslow had quite low charges and that for a number of years there has not been a review of the charges which left the service underfunded... The current structure of the charges is not easy to administer and leaves the service heavily subsidised with mean tested water charges and no differentiation for allotment holders that live out of the borough.

The London Borough of Hounslow is proposing a new fee structure to make the fees and charges more transparent and to support better managed allotments – the proposed new fees and charges structure is as follows:

- Abolition of a separate water fee
- An increase to an all-inclusive rental fee in line with average London charges which will be inclusive of water charges (proposed at £120pa)
- The introduction of an out of borough allotment holder fee (proposed at £250pa)
- A smaller increase for sites with no water provision such as Saxon Avenue and Manor Garden (proposed at £90pa)
- Abolition of blanket concessionary fee for all over 65. Any concessions for over 65 will be based upon evidence that the allotment holder is receiving benefits including pension benefits.
- Concessionary fee kept frozen (proposed at £36pa) and inclusive of water charges

The concessions proposed to be applicable to all tenants are:

- People receiving pension credits
- Disability allowance
- Job Seekers allowance
- Any other Council benefits

All the proposed charges are for ten rods and will be applied pro-rata for smaller plots. The proposed fees and charges if agreed would not be applied until the next fees and charges Council ratification in February 2022 and would be implemented at a later date in the same year, likely spring 2022. We would like to gather feedback and provide plenty of time to notify allotment holders and to continue our engagement.

To send us feedback please email us at: AllotmentCharges@hounslow.gov.uk

I hope you appreciate that the proposal is to increase the charges in order to sustain and improve the services, but if you feel the charges are not quite right, we are interested in hearing your reasons and ideas. Please note that by using this email address there will be a no-response autoreply as it has been set up purposely to capture your feedback.

The process and timeline would be as follows

When	What
February-March 2021	You are welcome to send us your feedback on the proposed new charges by sending us an email to AllotmentCharges@hounslow.gov.uk by 19 March
24 February 2021	The newly formed Allotment Forum ("Forum") meeting will be meeting to discuss the proposed new charges
April 2021	The feedback received during February and March will be used to assess whether any changes are needed to the fees and charges
May 2021	A letter with the outcome of our discussions will be sent back to all allotment holders to notify them if any changes have been applied
Summer and Autumn 2021	Continue the dialogue with allotment holders through the Forum and other means. Discuss the Strategy and its progress, agree specific interventions and review improvement plan
March 2022	Cabinet fees and charges decision
Spring 2022	New charges apply

I hope that with the above timetable we will be able to engage with as many allotment holders as we can. The re-instatement of the Allotment Forum will be a key action that will allow us to work more closely together. If you are interested to know more about the Forum please contact Jim Buchan at allotments@hounslow.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully



Stefania Horne
Head of Parks and Leisure