

Midlothian Council takes charge of turning off the lights

Contractors face charges of up to £450 to have traffic lights switched off during roadworks under new plans from Midlothian Council.

The local authority is proposing to take over control of its traffic lights and charge each time they have to switch them off and on because of temporary lights.

The move is one of a number of new charges which are being put to councillors next week for approval as the council looks to bring in more cash.

They are also considering introducing a licence fee for people who board pets in their homes but do not need inspected and scrapping a room by room fee for bedbugs and replacing it with a whole house charge after finding some people were cutting costs by only tackling the worst affected room.

A report, which is due to go before councillors next week, says that while neighbouring local authorities charge to switch traffic lights on and off for work, Midlothian leaves contractors to use a private firm to do the work.

Now they are proposing to do it themselves with a £150 fee for each switch on or off during office hours, going up to £300 out of hours and £450 in an emergency or with less than five days notice.

The report says additional charges will be incurred of council staff are delayed at sites saying: "The charges proposed are a flat rate and allow for Midlothian Council attendance up to one hour after the arranged attendance time.

"In instances where the switch on/off does not take place within one hour of the arranged time a further flat charge of £150 will be applied, with subsequent charges of £150 for every additional hour/part hour thereof."

The report on the new charges also scraps single room fees for tackling bedbugs and cockroaches after saying people were cutting corners when booking the pest control service.

It said: "The current per room charging model of £155 is considered to have influenced some customers to initially only treat one room within the house (the worst affected room) as a cost saving exercise which resulted in perpetuating the infestation and making it more difficult to eradicate the problem/prevent spread to neighbours.

"The proposed new charging scale, with the removal of the option to treat only one room, introduces new charges for up to 3 bedrooms plus a living room to be treated as well as charges for properties with more than 3 bedrooms."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter