

CABINET

20th February 2025

Report of the Leader of the Council

Corporate Review of Fees and Charges 2025/26

EXEMPT INFORMATION

None

PURPOSE

This is a key decision as it affects two or more Wards and involves income over £100k.

To seek approval for the proposed fees and charges payable with effect from 1st April 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To implement the annual inflationary increase (5.5%) for the fees and charges where appropriate.
2. That delegated authority be given, to set the new fees and charges for the TEC 2 and Flex Buildings, to the Portfolio Holder and the Interim Executive Director Finance, in consultation with the Assistant Director Growth and Regeneration.
3. To endorse increases in the charges applied for goods sold through the catering bar and shops throughout the year as these are based on cost price plus a margin.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Financial regulations state that the setting and reviewing of fees, charges and other income sources must be authorised in accordance with the detail set out in the Constitution and the Scheme of Delegation, under the General Delegations of Powers and Duties to Authorised Officers, which states:

In consultation with the Interim Executive Director Finance and where necessary the Portfolio Holder, to set, unless the charge requires Council approval, rent, fees, charges and other income levels unless any changes: -

- Exceed inflation by more than 3% and/or
- Involve a change in policy; or
- Potentially have significant political implications.

A review of fees and charges has been undertaken as part of the budget setting

process to ensure that each charge is appropriate and achieving its objective. Where charges are intended to either break even or maximise income, analysis has been carried out to look at the total costs of providing the service to understand what the position is. Some services have taken this review a stage further and reviewed benchmarking data to understand how our fee rates compare to our nearest neighbours.

The review has not covered all service areas as they may be subject to other ongoing work around reviewing charges such as planning and car park fees. These will be reported separately once the reviews are complete.

Work on the fees and charges for both the new TEC 2 and Flex Buildings is underway but is reliant on building valuations being received from external parties. It is recommended that delegated authority to set these new fees and charges be given to the Portfolio Holder and the Executive Director Finance, in consultation with the Assistant Director Growth and Regeneration as they will need to be implemented before the next review in February 2026.

There are some fees and charges that are set by statute these fees will increase in line with statutory guidance at the appropriate time.

The report excludes ground rents, service charges for HRA properties, commercial rents and charges for bed and breakfast as these are outside the scope of this review.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose by 2.5% in the twelve months to December 2024. The fees and charges increase proposed for 2025/26 is 5.5%. In making any decisions about increases to fees and charges it is important to balance the need to cover costs, particularly when inflation is high, whilst not discouraging customers to take up the services from the Council.

The fees and charges effective from 1st April 2025 per service are set out at Appendix 1.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Increases in fees and charges at 2.5% have already been included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy reported elsewhere on this agenda, provided that usage levels remain constant.

LEGAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

The Fees and Charges Policy delegates authority to the relevant officer to apply annual inflationary increases in fees and charges.

There is a risk that by increasing the fees and charges across the Council there will be negative feedback and customers will be deterred from using services. This has been mitigated by researching other providers and increasing fees to remain competitive, and the impact will be monitored closely through the Quarterly Performance Reports.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

Attached at Appendix 2

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE)

None

REPORT AUTHOR

If Members would like further information or clarification prior to the meeting please contact Jo Goodfellow Interim Executive Director Finance – tel. 709241

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fees and Charges Policy
Financial Guidance

Appendix 1 Fees and Charges 2025/26
Appendix 2 Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)

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