

## Fees and Charges (Resources, Jill Stockdale)

**Synopsis of report:**

To recommend the proposed fees and charges under this Committee's remit for next financial year.

**Recommendation(s):**

The proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix A be approved to be effective from the dates within the appendix or as soon as practical thereafter.

### 1. Context of report

- 1.1. The current fees and charges were agreed twelve months ago at the committee meeting in November 2021.

### 2. Report

- 2.1. The Council Constitution provides delegated authority to Officers to alter fees, charges and prices without reference to Committee in order to respond to market conditions, new needs, changes in tax rates and so on. Nonetheless, the annual review of charges still remain an important part of the overall budget setting process and the policy framework for service provision in general.
- 2.2. As part of the budget setting process, Service Managers are requested to review their charges each year. Members have previously agreed that officers put forward recommended increases based on:
  - Current market conditions
  - Local competition
  - The likely yield of any fee increase
  - On-going savings targets and revenue reduction programs
- 2.3. Members have accepted that in some service areas it may not be possible to significantly increase fees, and in others it may be necessary to decrease them to stimulate demand, however in order to counteract the high levels of inflation officers were asked to aim for an average of 8% for discretionary locally set charges where to do so would not be detrimental to the service.
- 2.4. This report reviews current levels of fees and charges, with a view to helping to balance next year's budget and is a key strand of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.5. The fees and charges proposed by service managers for next year are set out at Appendix A along with the dates that they will take effect. The appendix includes a Yield column showing the budget for each charges/group of charges, so that Members can estimate the financial implications of any price rises.

### 3 Resource implications

#### 3.1 Development Management

The management of development through the determination of applications in a positive and proactive manner, and in a timely manner. Planning application fees are currently set by statute. There is no proposal by the Government to increase the fees in 2023.

The charges for the Council's pre-application advice service were reviewed by the Planning Committee on 23 October 2019 to come into effect on 1 January 2020.

- 3.2 **Building Control**  
The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 aim to allow local authorities to respond to competition from the private sector by devolving the setting of charges for some building control functions. The Regulations require authorities to prepare systems within which they will fix and recover charges for the performance of the prescribed building regulation control functions. The aim is to recover the full cost of operating a building control service by breaking even over each three-year period.
- 3.3 Building Control fees are currently set with guidance issued by Local Authority Building Control. There is a proposal to increase these fees by 5% from 1 April 2023.
- 3.4 **General**  
All other discretionary fees and charges have been increased by approximately 8%.
- 4 **Legal implications**
- 4.1 Where the status of a charge is marked as 'statutory' the Council is required under the law to levy a fee. Where the status is given as 'discretionary' the Council may amend the fee charged or choose to make no charge for the service.
- 5 **Equality implications**
- 5.1 Where any major changes to the structure of any charging regime are proposed, an Equality impact Assessment will have been completed by the relevant Budget Manager.
6. **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**
- 6.1 There are no direct implications from the setting of fees and charges. Environmental, Sustainability and Biodiversity implications are reviewed as part of overall service area planning and decision making,
7. **Timetable for Implementation**
- 7.1 The proposed fees and charges as set out in this report are to be effective from the dates within the appendix or as soon as practical thereafter.
8. **Conclusions**
- 8.1 High inflation is a cost to the Council as well as to our customers. Setting fees and charges is a fine balance between generating income for the Council to help support and maintain services and ensuring that the service will not be adversely affected by a drop in usage through over-pricing.

**(To resolve)**

**Background papers**

None