

Portfolio Holder for Housing

26th January 2021

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT

A.1 Housing General Fund - Proposed Fees and Charges for 2021/22

(Report prepared by Tim Clarke)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek the Portfolio Holder's concurrence to the proposed schedule of fees and charges 2021/22 for Housing General Fund.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In a change from previous years, the approval of fees and charges is now being considered separately alongside the development of the detailed budget proposals each year rather than as part of it.
- The above approach emerged from the budget scrutiny process last year and is designed to provide greater opportunity / time to scrutinise individual elements of the budget rather than forming part of the more comprehensive budget proposals where a considerable amount of information is presented to members at the same time.
- This report therefore sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2021/22 for Housing General Fund services. They have been considered against a number of key principles that form part of the long term financial forecast approach which are set out later on in this report.
- Any amendments to income budgets that are required to reflect changes to fees and charges will be included in the detailed budget proposals for 2021/22 that will be considered by Cabinet / Full Council next year.
- In respect of Full Council next year, the individual decisions agreeing fees and charges will be collated and presented as part of the overall budget proposals for 2021/22.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Schedule of Fees and Charges 2021/22 for Housing General Fund services set out in Appendix A be agreed.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The forecasting and budget setting process, including fees and charges, will have direct implications for the Council's ability to deliver on its objectives and priorities. At its heart, the 10 year approach to the forecast seeks to establish a sound and sustainable budget year on year through maximising income, including income raised from fees and charges, whilst limiting reductions in services provided to residents, businesses and visitors.

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance and other resources

Fees and Charges have been reviewed against the key principles that underpin the long term forecast, which includes the generation of income whilst balancing strategic and external market conditions.

However a key underlying principle is to consider inflationary increases wherever possible to support the Council's overall financial position to balance inflationary pressures against expenditure budgets but recognising the restrictions placed on local authorities in terms of setting fees and charges on a cost recovery basis.

Any changes to income budgets resulting from any changes in the level of fees and charges agreed, will form part of the detailed budget setting process over the remainder of this financial year.

Risk

No significant risks have been identified.

LEGAL

The arrangements for setting and agreeing a budget and for the setting and collection of council tax are defined in the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The previous legislation defining the arrangements for charging, collecting and pooling of Business Rates was contained within the Local Government Finance Act 1988. These have both been amended as appropriate to reflect the introduction of the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

Trading and the power to charge are set out in the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 and the Local Government Act 2003 – Section 93 respectively. The latter also requires that charges for discretionary services should be on a cost recovery basis.

The following was agreed as part for the review of the Council's constitution earlier in the year:
Para 4.4.1 (8) Part 3.4 – All Assistant Directors, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, Management Team Member and the Assistant Director (Finance & IT), are authorised to decide the level of the annual discretionary fees and charges for their service (including any in-year changes that may be required) for inclusion within the Council's corporate schedule of fees and charges. Following the above consultation, an Officer decision must be published.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.

Fee and charges have generally been increased by around 2%, an impact that is considered to be minimal.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Income from fees and charges form an important element of the budget and the financial sustainability of the Council as set out in the long term forecast.

Fees and charges have historically been included within the detailed estimates but as highlighted within the Executive Summary above, they are now being considered separately alongside the preparation of the wider budget proposals.

Departments have been asked to review their fees and charges on an individual basis as changes may need to be made to meet specific aims or strategic objectives or in some cases in response to external factors such as market forces.

The review of fees and charges has been set against the following key principles:

- general inflationary increases where possible or lower where appropriate / justified (the underlying assumption for 2021/22 is a 2% increase)
- amounts rounded for ease of application, which may result in a slightly above inflation increase.
- on a cost recovery basis as necessary
- reflect statutory requirements.
- increases where market conditions allow
- to meet specific priorities or service delivery aims / objectives

Income budgets included in the detailed estimates will reflect any required changes from the proposed fees and charges set out in this report.

Environmental Health services - PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2021/22

Appendix A includes the schedule of fees and charges proposed for 2021/22, which have been developed by applying the key principles highlighted above.

Where they are not set by statute the fees and charges have been increased by around 2% over the 2019/20 figures.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Detailed fees and charges 2021/22 for Housing General Fund Services.
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