

BRIEFING REPORT

Public Protection Service Fees 2020/21



1.0 Description of Proposal

The proposal for the increase of discretionary fees and charges is in line with the Fees, Charges and Concessions Policy which was agreed by Cabinet on the 8th November 2016. This policy states that all fees and charges should recover costs. When costs increase it is important that fees and charges also increase to keep pace with those rising costs. The current budget position at the Council means that these cost increases cannot be absorbed. By implementing Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases each year this will avoid long periods of no review and any subsequent need for sudden increases.

The review of discretionary fees and charges has been undertaken in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and associated delivery plans, and therefore contributes to the overall objective of achieving a balanced budget. Failure to implement full cost recovery increases in discretionary fees and charges will require alternative savings to be developed and agreed by the Council.

2.0 Background - Fees, Charges and Concessions Policy

The key objectives of the policy are:

- Individual charging policy for each Portfolio area.
- Each financial year charges will generally be increased by Consumer Price Index (CPI) to ensure charges keep pace with the cost of providing services.
- Increases will be implemented in practical monetary values that make sense to customers. The CPI increase may be applied differently across a group of similar services in order to achieve this.
- The Council will ensure the full cost of a service is recovered, where that is the charging objective. Commercial services will be priced to generate a surplus. Where commercial services are not achieving that aim they will be reviewed, including the potential to improve the market offer.
- Non-residents may be charged differentially where appropriate.
- Charging decisions will be informed by intelligence from other local authorities and providers.
- Where relevant, charging decisions will be supported by an equalities impact assessment.

3.0 Reason for change

The increase in discretionary fees and charges will achieve the following:

- Cover the rising cost of providing services;
- Ensure a consistent approach across the Council;
- Ensure that fees and charges which have not been uplifted in years are reviewed and subsequently increased if appropriate.

4.0 Next steps

Following the approval of the revised fees and charges set out in the schedules, services will raise their fees on or after the 1st April 2021, giving reasonable notice to service users.

Decision required by the Cabinet Member Councillor Haydon

It is recommended to increase the discretionary fees and charges as per the schedules by CPI and to recover full costs. It is also recommended not to increase fees that will not be competitive in the market if uplifted by CPI (see below).

All of the fees have been reviewed and the majority of the fees will be increased by CPI. However, the following fees have been identified that cannot be increased and one additional fee that needs to be added.

5.0 Fees required to remain the same

5.1. Temporary Event Notice – Check and Send Service

The application fee for a Temporary Event Notice is set by Government at £21.

Four years ago, a fee was introduced so that if an application is received which is not valid and requires amendments, the Licensing Officer can check and agree amendments with the applicant for a set fee of £15.

The fee covers the full costs of the service. It is therefore proposed that no increase is made to this fee as it would not be reasonable or proportionate and would be unnecessary as the full costs are already being recovered.

6.0 New fees

6.1 Direct Debit Fee - £18

This would enable the Public Protection Service to charge a small fee to recover the costs involved in setting up a direct debit for payment of a licence. For example where a taxi driver requires a direct debit to be set up to pay their licence a year in advance.