



Portfolio Holder Report

The portfolio holder will make a decision on this item after seven days have elapsed (including the date of publication).

| Report of: | Portfolio Holder | Date of publication |
|--|---|---------------------|
| Michael Ryan, Corporate Director of People and Places and Philippa Davies, Corporate Director of Resources | Cllr Alan Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder, Cllr Peter Murphy, Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Cllr Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, Cllr Lynne Bowen, Leisure and Culture Portfolio Holder, Cllr David Henderson, Street Scene and Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder, Cllr Vivien Taylor, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder | |

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2016/17

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To confirm the proposed fees and charges for the 2016/17 financial year and those being implemented with immediate effect thereby impacting on 2015/16.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Increase in income generation to support the Council's Budget.
- 2.2 Continual improvement of service provision.

3. Recommendation/s

- 3.1 That the proposed fees and charges, as set out in Appendix 1, for the financial year 2016/17 be approved.

- 3.2** That the increased fee for the Bronze Vase and Holder (Paragraph 5.2.2) be implemented with immediate effect.
- 3.3** That the revised fees for advice in relation to the application of the Flood Risk Sequential Test (Paragraph 5.4.1) be implemented with immediate effect.

4. Background

- 4.1** The Cabinet last formally considered its charging policy, as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan, at its meeting on 9 September 2015.
- 4.2** In September 1999 the Audit Commission published “The Price Is Right” which advised Councils to focus attention on charges and addresses the following issues:
- Establish clear principles for charging;
 - Integrating charging into service management and forge links with corporate objectives;
 - Set clear objectives and targets to qualify success in charging;
 - Build an understanding of users and markets;
 - Improve decision making by taking into account the likely impact of changes to charges; and
 - Innovate via imaginative use of charging structures.
- 4.3** In January 2008, the Audit Commission published a further report entitled “Positively Charged”, which identified how different councils’ use their powers to charge for services and draws conclusions that support their earlier publication in that:
- Charging for local services makes a significant contribution to council finances and for district councils charges make the greatest contribution to service delivery;
 - Councils use charges to influence individuals’ choices and to bring benefits to local communities. Charges can be set to encourage or discourage people to use services and through concessions to pursue local objectives; and
 - Councils need to understand better the likely impact of charges on users and on patterns of service use.
- 4.4** The report recommends, amongst other things, that where there is a subsidy to provide a service, this is transparent as part of the decision making process; that service managers should be aware of both users and non-users of the service being charged for; to engage services users and taxpayers more in decisions about charging levels and that there should be regular debate on charges and charging policy.
- 4.5** A new briefing entitled ‘Income from Charging’ was issued by the Audit Commission in September 2013 which used data from the value for money profiles and presented a high level analysis of councils’ income from charging and the contribution it makes to service spending and allowed comparisons to other councils of the same type and changes over time. The data was the subject of a value for money review

undertaken as part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme and was considered at the meeting 15 December 2014.

- 4.6** The level of income generated by fees and charges, and in particular projected increases which the Council can influence, forms a key part of the Council's financial planning and is therefore reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 Health and Community Engagement Portfolio

The new Health and Community Engagement Portfolio includes income from Pest Control, Food Safety Services and Private Water Supplies.

5.1.1 Pest Control

An increase of £2 from £38 to £40 is proposed for the control of rodents in domestic premises with the introduction of a 10% discount for households in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council tax discount. The charge for near neighbours (5 doors either side) is also increasing by £2 from £28 to £30. There are no other increases proposed taking into account the results of a benchmarking exercise conducted in September 2015. Businesses will be able to buy commercial fly catching equipment, with stock being purchased on receipt of orders and a charge of £10 will be introduced for testing UV Fly killers at commercial premises. The benefit to public health of operating the pest control service at a slight subsidy is acknowledged with the subsidy excluding support service costs for 2014/15 being £4,738, a reduction of £5,287 compared to 2013/14.

5.1.2 Food Safety Services

The 'Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene' course which was classroom based will no longer be offered as people now complete on-line courses. No change is proposed for all other fees.

5.1.3 Contaminated Land

It is proposed to increase the fee for contaminated land enquiries from £47 to £60 which is more comparable to other Local Authorities that charge for such enquiries.

5.2 Leisure and Culture Portfolio

The main venues within the Leisure and Culture portfolio that generate substantial levels of fee income are the Marine Hall, Thornton Little Theatre and Cemeteries. This portfolio also includes fee income from outside sports facilities.

5.2.1 Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre

It is proposed to maintain the majority of fees at current levels for Thornton Little Theatre and the Marine Hall with a view to encouraging increased use thereby reducing the Council's subsidy. The subsidy for prior years for both venues (excluding notional charges) can be seen in the following table.

| | Subsidy 2014/15 £ | Subsidy 2013/14 £ | Improved Financial Position £ |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Thornton Little Theatre | 63,949 | 87,683 | 23,734 |
| Marine Hall | 255,435 | 299,588 | 44,153 |
| Total | 319,384 | 387,271 | 67,887 |

The fixed fee for a wedding will be replaced by an hourly rate with a minimum of 12 hours per wedding priced competitively to encourage bookings. Additional charging bands will also be introduced at the Marine Hall for weddings with 250 people or more. A 20% discount for weddings held at the Marine Hall on Monday to Thursday will be offered to attract more mid-week weddings. It is proposed to charge an hourly rate when half the Studio Room at Thornton Little Theatre and the Waterfront Room or the Wyre Bar at Marine Hall are used as dressing rooms. Several new miscellaneous charges are being introduced at the Marine Hall together with an increase in the hourly rate for the hire of additional stage crew. The carpet bowls fee will be deleted as this service ceased several years ago.

5.2.2 Cemeteries

It is suggested that the majority of fees be increased by approximately 1% having considered the fees charged by neighbouring authorities. It is proposed to increase the charge for the Bronze Vase and Holder immediately due to increased supplier costs.

There is no increase proposed for Mushroom plaques, bench plaques, benches, sundial plaques, baby garden plaques, small white metal urns and oak crematoria caskets to encourage further sales and remain competitive. It is proposed to keep fees constant for the Fleetwood and Poulton Columbarium and use of the cemetery chapel at Poulton to encourage future use. The Genealogical Family tree grave search has now been removed due to the introduction of 'Deceased Online'. The cemetery service in 2014/15 generated a small surplus of £32,543 after many years of the service failing to achieve a break even position.

5.2.3 Leisure Development

No increases are proposed this year as the majority of fees were increased by between 3% and 4% last year.

5.2.4 Marsh Mill

No increases are proposed to the minimal fees currently being levied.

5.2.5 Visit Wyre

No increase is proposed to the charge for the use of the Visit Wyre Bus to encourage use, it was hired out 9 times in 2014/15.

It is proposed to delete the charges for advertising entries within the Wyre Visitor Guide which was agreed by the Leisure and Culture Portfolio Holder in July 2014. It was found that the amount of officer time taken to

raise the income through selling advertising space was cost prohibitive.

5.3 Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder

The main service within the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety portfolio that generates a substantial level of fee income is car parking. This portfolio also includes income from Licencing and Renovation Grants.

5.3.1 Car Parking

Cabinet at their meeting 9th April 2014 agreed the adoption of the Car Parking Strategy 2014-19 and in particular 'that in order to fully assess the impacts of the new arrangements with Booths and to support local businesses, all parking charges be frozen at their current rates until a full assessment of the impact could be made.' A review of car parking charges incorporating residents passes is likely to commence following the new Poulton Booths store opening in November 2015.

5.3.2 Licencing

Amendments to fees and charges for licencing are the responsibility of the Licencing Committee and will be considered later this year.

5.3.3 Housing

No increase is proposed to fees which are usually increased in line with the September Consumer Price Index (CPI) because the CPI fell by 0.1% in the year to September 2015. The charge for the Handyperson service will remain at £10 to encourage continued use of the service with an ageing population.

5.4 Planning and Economic Development Portfolio

The three main service areas within the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio that generate substantial levels of fee income are Planning, Building Control and Fleetwood Market.

The majority of the Building Control Fees are set in accordance with the Building Regulations Act 2010 allowing authorities to fix their own charges based on full cost recovery. The Head of Built Environment has the delegated authority to amend these fees as necessary. Similarly, all tenancy matters, including market rents are delegated to the Head of Built Environment. The fees for submitting planning applications required by Legislation are set nationally and there is no current indication that the statutory fees which came into force 6 April 2014 will change in the near future.

5.4.1 Development Control

The majority of discretionary income relates to pre-application discussions fees which were introduced from April 2014 and no increase is proposed. The new charge for policy advice in relation to the application of the Flood Risk Sequential Test was introduced this year having been agreed by the Economy Portfolio Holder 9 April 2015. The fees have been found not to adequately reflect the amount of officer time spent on providing this advice in an initial request and an increase is therefore proposed with immediate effect.

5.4.2 Building Control

No increases are proposed to ensure compliance with the Building Regulations Act 2010 which requires recovery of costs.

5.4.3 Markets

Indoor market rents are reviewed every three years and delegated to the Head of Built Environment.

It is proposed that the outdoor market fees at Poulton and Fleetwood remain unchanged recognising the difficult economic climate. It is proposed to introduce a £5 fee for the daily hire of a gazebo at Fleetwood Market for outside traders who do not own their own.

5.4.4 Estates

It is proposed to introduce new charges for the use of land licence agreements and call outs for commercial events, funfairs and circuses.

5.4.5 Garstang Business Centre

Fees will be retained at the current level pending the exploration of development options.

5.4.6 Wyred Up

Charges were introduced from January 2015 for membership of the Wyred Up service as agreed by Portfolio Holder 18 December 2014 and it is not proposed to increase these at this stage. It is proposed to amend the description for the Wyre Expo event, however, to Wyre Expo event (Non-Wyre Business) as all Wyre based businesses have been encouraged to become members of Wyred Up for £40 which includes the Expo event. It is proposed to increase the Wyre Expo event (Non-Wyre Business) charge from £35-£55 to £80-£100.

5.5 Resources Portfolio

5.5.1 Legal Fees

The authority to determine charges for the recovery of legal costs is delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources. No increase is proposed to fees which are usually increased in line with the September CPI because the CPI fell by 0.1% in the year to September 2015.

5.5.2 Land Charges

The determination of fees and charges for Local Land charges is delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources. The Council is required to ensure that over a three year period, the total income from charges does not exceed the total costs of granting access to property records. Any required changes will be effective from 1st April 2016.

5.5.3 Civic Centre Room Hire

It is proposed to maintain fees at the current levels with the aim of increasing the number of bookings as during the past three years the budgeted level of income has not been achieved. The fee for civil ceremonies is now inclusive of VAT as per recent VAT guidance.

5.5.4 Street Naming and Numbering

It is proposed to maintain fees at the current level as they continue to be representative of the administration involved.

5.6 Street Scene and Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio

The main services within the Street Scene portfolio are public conveniences, the dog warden service, bulky domestic waste, countryside, parks and outdoor amenity charges.

5.6.1 Public Conveniences

The Council currently charges 20p and it is felt that this is a fair rate for the use of the facilities and comparable with other Local Authorities who apply a fee.

5.6.2 Dog Welfare

No increase is proposed to fees which are usually increased in line with the September CPI because the CPI fell by 0.1% in the year to September 2015. A tender process for dog kennelling is currently being undertaken but was delayed due to a change in ownership of the Council's current provider. A review of fees will follow the letting of the new contract.

5.6.3 Domestic Refuse – Bulky Items

No increase is proposed to the current fee of £18 in order to encourage use of the service. The current subsidy of one third discount to recipients of certain benefits is to be reviewed in early 2016/17. The service is currently subsidised by the council with the value of this subsidy in 2014/15 being £16,262.

5.6.4 Provision of Standard Suite of Waste Recycling Containers-New Properties

It is proposed to maintain the delivery/administration fee at £47 and introduce a new fee for the provision of a non-standard container at cost plus a 10% administration fee.

5.6.5 Street Cleansing

It is proposed to introduce a new fee for the recovery of collection and disposal costs of fly tipping incidents at cost plus a 10% administration fee.

5.6.6 Countryside

Fees were increased in January 2015 and no increase is proposed given the current low level of inflation.

5.6.7 Wyre Estuary Country Park/ Fleetwood Memorial Park/ Rossall Point

It is proposed to maintain fees at the current level. The increase of £10 introduced with effect from 1 April 2015 at the Wyre Estuary Country Park Riverside room appears to have had a negative impact on bookings this year with income received to date being £160 compared to annual income in 2014/15 of £1,020.

5.6.8 Outdoor Amenity Charges

A review of bowling has been undertaken and consultation with bowling clubs is currently ongoing. Any changes to fees and charges from the outcome of these discussions will be proposed in a future Portfolio Holder report. Minor increases are proposed to the charges for pitch and putt with no increases proposed to crazy golf charges.

5.7 **Overview and Scrutiny**

Initial proposals for amendments or increases to fees and charges have been reviewed and discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting 7 December with their recommendations being reported to Management Board on 16 December 2015.

Delegated functions

- 6.1 The matters referred to in this report are considered under the following executive function delegated to each Portfolio Holder (as set out in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution): " To determine charges or fees for any relevant services operated within the Portfolio"

| Financial and legal implications | |
|---|--|
| Finance | The financial implications of the fees and charges will be reflected in the Revenue Estimates which will be considered by Cabinet at their meeting 17 February 2016. |
| Legal | There are no significant legal implications arising from the proposals in this report. |

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

| risks/implications | ✓ / x |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| community safety | x |
| equality and diversity | x |
| sustainability | x |
| health and safety | x |

| risks/implications | ✓ / x |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| asset management | x |
| climate change | x |
| data protection | x |

| report author | telephone no. | email | date |
|---------------|---------------|------------------------|----------|
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| List of background papers: | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|
| name of document | date | where available for inspection |
| | | |

List of appendices

Appendix 1– Proposed fees and charges for the 2016/17 financial year.

arm/o&s/cr/15/0712jw1