

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer (Introduced by Cabinet Member (Finance and Public Protection))	Cabinet	17th January 2024

Fees and Charges 2024-25

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Yes
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards
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Purpose of the Report

1. This report sets out the current position around fees and charges and proposals for 2024/2025. Increases will be implemented from 1st April 2024 or the most suitable date following.

Recommendations to Cabinet

2. To note the current levels of budgeted fees and charges and issues specific to these.
3. To approve the changes to 'Other Licensing Fees and Housing' category of fees and charges as per point 21 and Appendix 3
4. To approve an increase in the cost of Council Tax and Business Rates Summons and Liability Orders of £9.50. This will reflect the actual costs of undertaking statutory recovery action, as recently identified in the review by the Shared Customer Services Team. It should be noted that charges are only levied following due process, in line with the Council's Fair Collection Charter, and all steps are undertaken to support our residents in paying their bills in advance of these being issued. Further details are provided in point 20.
5. To approve increases of 10% for 360L and 5% for 1100L bin collections in Trade Waste as per point 22.
6. To approve an increase in charges at the Conference Centre over the coming three years, to uplift other charges in line with this, and to expand the charge for refreshments to include all bookings made, but at a reduced price of £1 per attendee, as per point 23 and Appendix 4.

7. To approve a general increase of up to 6.7% in the fees for 2024/25 (limited to the services listed in Table 3 of Appendix 1). Given that the rate of CPI in September was 6.7%, and RPI was 8.9%, the recommended uplift is in line with inflation.
8. To note that fees and charges in respect of Worden Hall will be reviewed during the year as part of the commercial strategy review.
9. To approve the full list of fees and charges for upload onto the Council website.

Reasons for recommendations

10. To ensure that fees and charges are set at appropriate levels and are publicly available.

Other options considered and rejected

11. No other options were considered as we are required to review fees and charges every year.

Executive summary

5. This report sets out the key fees and charges budgets and the income generated from each, together with proposals for changes to be made with effect from 1 April 2024.

Corporate priorities

6. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

7. The Council generates significant income from various fees and charges. The majority of these charges are set either nationally (Table 1) or on an individual basis (Table 4).

Fees and Charges Position

1. **Appendix 1** details the key fees and charges budgets across a number of categories. It should be noted however, that the tables are not exhaustive or exclusive (i.e. some fees and charges fall into more than one category) but they give an indication of the core fees covered.
2. **Table 1** provides details of those charges over which the Council has no control in setting the amount that can be charged. The largest of these relates to Planning Application fees. Whilst the fee is not within local control, it is the volume of the applications which can significantly impact upon this budget and the income generated, along with the size of the applications made. In recent years there have been a large number of individual applications and as a result Planning Fee income budgets have been increased. It is not

expected that this will continue in the medium term. Government increased General Planning Fees with effect from 6th December 2023 by 25%, and by 35% for major developments. It has been usual for Planning Fees to rise every few years rather than annually but the new regulations provide for an annual indexation increase. However alongside these increases, there are new requirements in force, for example a reduction in fee must be given if an application is not processed within given timescales; this may impact upon the level of income achieved against the budgets set.

3. **Table 2** illustrates the specific fees and charges that generate an income of greater than £50k. The largest of these relates to the Councils investment sites. Outside of these charges the biggest income streams relate to garden waste, trade waste and vehicle maintenance.
4. **Table 3** shows the fees and charges that have generally been increased by a given percentage, or through an inflationary uplift, as opposed to being subject to a full, formal review. The increases across these can vary, but it is proposed to apply a maximum general increase to these of 6.7%, which is consistent with the rate of CPI in September 2023, i.e. the rate that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has used as the benchmark in the Autumn Statement. This change would equate to a forecast increase in revenue of £13k, based on current levels of volume/demand.
5. **Table 4** illustrates the more significant areas which impact upon the amount of income generated through changes in charges. An update on these charges is below:
 - Other Investment Rentals and Leases – these are negotiated on a case-by-case basis to ensure maximum financial benefit and to reflect commercial rates.
 - Car Parking fees – revised charges came into force in March 2023.
 - Building control fees – these are regularly reviewed and increased in line with national guidelines, to ensure the fees are covering all relevant costs.
 - Market Rents – these are generally considered separately to this annual review and have been increased on an adhoc basis as individual traders have changed.

Fees and Charges Proposals

6. Following analysis and review by the Shared Customer Services Team of the costs associated with summons and liability charges for non-payment of Council Tax and Business Rates, it is proposed to increase the charge for Council Tax and Business Rates Summons and Liability Orders by £9.50 to ensure that income is consistent with the costs incurred to undertake the process. This will result in a freeze in Summons charges and an increase in Liability order charges – it should be noted that when a summons is issued in addition to the charge set by the council, 50p is also charged by the Ministry of Justice for their administrative costs (this is included within the proposal figure for accuracy of the total charge). The Council maintains its use of the Fair Collection Charter which ensures we take a fair and sensitive approach for non-payment cases. This recommendation makes no changes to the Council's commitment to support our residents in paying their bills, and charges are only made when due processes have been completely exhausted. The change is estimated to increase income in this area by £34k. For comparison, current charges across Lancashire, where known, are shown in the table below:

Council	Total	
	Council Tax	Business Rates
South Ribble	£80.00	£80.00
Chorley	£89.50	£89.50
Blackburn	£76.50	£127.50
Burnley	£95.00	£125.00
Fylde	£72.50	£72.50
Hyndburn	£87.50	£125.00
Lancaster	£80.00	£197.00
Pendle	£82.50	£102.50
Preston	£80.00	£184.20
Ribble Valley	£63.00	£63.00
Rosendale	£92.50	£92.50
West Lancashire	£72.50	£72.50
Wyre	£72.50	£72.50

7. Current 'Other Licencing and Housing/Pest Control Fees & Charges' generate revenue income of £82.6k. The proposal is to restructure the charges; the comparison of the current fees and charges to those proposed are highlighted in Appendix 3. Whilst it is anticipated that income levels will increase as a result of the changes and simplification of applicable charges, the total income generated is not expected to be materially different overall.
8. Trade waste fees have not been increased since 2021/22 when the last charging exercise was undertaken, at which time they were raised by 3%. It is proposed to increase 360L bins by 10% and 1100L bins by 5%, generating an increase of approximately £30k, with a view to reviewing the structure of the fees in 2024/25 for implementation in 2025/26. Various subsidies and discounts exist in the current pricing structure which will need to be reviewed and examined for the appropriateness of the charging mechanism. For comparison, the table below shows the proposed charges compared to other publicly available information.

Size of Bin	South Ribble	Lancaster	Preston	Fylde	Biffa	Veolia
360 litre	£455.40	£582.40	£588.64	N/A	N/A	N/A
1100 litre	£1,097.25	£1,503.32	£1,079.52	£1,139.42	£994.24	£1,177.08

9. It is proposed to increase the charges at the Conference Centre over a three-year period, and to uplift other related charges in line with this. Details of the current and proposed charges are within Appendix 4. These charges have not been increased for at least four years. An examination of charges has shown that costs are currently higher than the income received for bookings, particularly for events held at weekends and outside of regular office hours.

Charges have not been increased for a number of years and although consideration was given to applying significantly higher charges for hire of the facilities at weekends and evenings to meet the increase in related salary costs, it was felt too great an increase to move to straight away and so the proposals for cost increases have focused on general charges, plus an increase for hire outside of normal opening hours.

Charity and Community groups currently pay on average around a third of the true cost of hiring the rooms. It is proposed to reduce the discount from two thirds to half of the cost. This is still a substantial discount that does not meet the costs involved, requiring council subsidy.

Following a review of charges for refreshments, the proposal is to charge for refreshments for all bookings but at a reduced price of £1 per booked numbers.

Further detail is contained within Appendix 4.

Climate change and air quality

10. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

11. None.

Risk

12. N/A.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

13. The financial implications relating to the review of fees and charges for 2024/25 are outlined within the report and the supporting appendices. A Summary Table is shown below.

Category of Fee or Charge	Additional Income
Council Tax and Business Rates Summons and Liability Orders - recovery admin charge	(34)
Trade Waste	(30)
General Increase of 6.7%	(13)
Total	(77)

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

14. The Monitoring Officer has no concerns with the proposed way forward outlined in this report. In terms of the fees referred to, the council has a discretion over the level of fees set but as ever, it must act in a reasonable fashion.

Background documents

15. There are no background papers to this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Fees and Charges Tables

Appendix 2 - Detailed Fees and Charges List

Appendix 3 - Comparison of Current & Proposed 'Other Licencing & Housing'

Appendix 4 - Conferencing

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