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# Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Task and Finish Group Report on Fees and Charges

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| <b>Committee considering report:</b>        | Executive                  |
| <b>Date of Committee:</b>                   | 21 September 2023          |
| <b>Portfolio Member:</b>                    | Councillor Iain Cottingham |
| <b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b> | 7 June 2023                |
| <b>Report Author:</b>                       | Gordon Oliver              |
| <b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>                    | EX4379                     |

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

To provide a response to the recommendations made in the report from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) Task and Finish Group on Fees and Charges, which was presented to Members of the OSMC in March 2023.

## 2 Recommendation

For the Executive to agree the proposed action plan that has been developed in response to the recommendations raised by the Task and Finish Group.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

| Implication            | Commentary  |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Financial:</b>      | There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have financial implications if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes. |
| <b>Human Resource:</b> | There are no HR implications arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have HR implications if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.               |

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| <b>Legal:</b>  | There are no Legal implications arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have Legal implications if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.          |                |                 |   |
| <b>Risk Management:</b>  | The recommended actions do not introduce any significant new risks for the Council at this stage. Some actions may affect risks to the Council if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes. |                |                 |   |
| <b>Property:</b>   | There are no Property implications arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have Property implications if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.    |                |                 |   |
| <b>Policy:</b>   | There are no Policy implications arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have Property implications if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.      |                |                 |   |
|  | <b>Positive</b>  | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Negative</b> | <b>Commentary</b>   |
| <b>Equalities Impact:</b>  |  |                |                 |   |
| <b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?               |  | X              |                 | There are no inequality impacts arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have implications for inequalities if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.                                |
| <b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users? |  | X              |                 | There are no impacts for people with protected characteristics arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have implications for inequalities if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes. |

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| <b>Environmental Impact:</b>        |   | X |  | There are no environmental impacts arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have environmental impacts if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.  |
| <b>Health Impact:</b>               |   | X |  | There are no health impacts arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Some actions may have environmental impacts if implemented and these would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.   |
| <b>ICT Impact:</b>                  |   | X |  | None.  |
| <b>Digital Services Impact:</b>     |   | X |  | There are no impacts on Digital Services arising directly from the recommended actions at this stage. Any impacts associated with individual actions would be considered as part of any future decision making processes.  |
| <b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b> | X |   |  | The proposals outlined in this report support the following outcome under the 'Building Public Services for the Future' priority in the draft Council Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong budget management (compared to all local authorities in England) and initiatives to generate financial efficiency</li> </ul> |
| <b>Core Business:</b>               | X |   |  | If implemented, the recommendations related to Leisure Services would improve the leisure offer in West Berkshire and would ensure that discounts are appropriately targeted. This would support the Council's priority to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.  |
| <b>Data Impact:</b>                 |   | X |  | None   |

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Consultation and Engagement:</b> | <p>Relevant officers have been consulted, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources)</li><li>• Eric Owens (Service Director – Development and Regulation)</li><li>• April Peberdy (Interim Service Director – Communities and Wellbeing)</li><li>• Michelle Sancho (Acting Head of Education Services)</li><li>• Jon Winstanley (Service Director – Environment)</li></ul> |
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## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group was created in January 2022 to consider further options in relation to charging for West Berkshire Council's services.
- 4.2 The OSMC received the final report in March 2023 and requested that this be referred to the Executive for consideration. An action plan has been developed against each of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations, which sets out the proposed responses to the Task Group's recommendations.
- 4.3 It should be noted that some of the report's recommendations have already been implemented, or are being addressed through other mechanisms, such as contract retendering.
- 4.4 For some of the Task Group recommendations, further work is required in order to test the business case, or else it is recommended that proposals should not be implemented due to the lack of a clear business case.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.1 At its meeting on 25 January 2022, OSMC agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to consider further options in relation to charging for West Berkshire Council's services. The following were highlighted as the key areas of focus for the Task and Finish Group and its subsequent recommendations:
  - New proposals for Planning income;
  - The Leisure Strategy and fees and income potentially arising from this;
  - Other opportunities for commercial charging for services, particularly those provided by the following departments:
    - Development and Regulation
    - Communities and Wellbeing
    - Environment

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- 5.2 In addition to exploring further opportunities for charging for Council services, the Task Group was also asked to consider the value for money of the fees and charges levied and the appropriate balance between affordability and income generation.
- 5.3 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's terms of reference is provided in Appendix A.
- 5.4 The Task and Finish Group met five times between September 2022 and January 2023 to collect evidence for the review. An interim report was presented to the OSMC meeting on 29 November 2022, which set out the Task and Finish Group's preliminary findings, with the final report presented to the OSMC on 7 March 2023.
- 5.5 The report set out a series of 10 recommendations across the following areas:
- Budget Report – Presentation of Information
  - Leisure Fees and Charges
  - Environment Fees and Charges
  - People Directorate Fees and Charges

### **Proposals**

- 5.6 Following a review of the recommendations, a proposed action plan has been prepared to respond to the points raised. This is set out in Appendix B of this report.

## **6 Other options considered**

- 6.1 The Executive could choose not to approve some or all of the proposed actions, however, it is important to respond to Member concerns about fees and charges where action has not already been taken in respect of the issues raised.

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The proposed Action Plan responds to the Task and Finish Group's recommendations, taking account of any actions that have already been implemented.

## **8 Appendices**

Appendix A - Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference

Appendix B – Proposed actions in response to the Task and Finish Group recommendations

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### **Background Papers:**

Fees and Charges Task Group – Interim Report, OSMC, 29 November 2022

Fees and Charges Task Group – Final Report, OSMC, 7 March 2023

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**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes:  No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

**Wards affected:** All wards

**Officer details:**

Name: Gordon Oliver  
Job Title: Principal Policy Officer (Democratic Services and Scrutiny)  
Tel No: 01635 519486  
E-mail: [Gordon.Oliver1@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:Gordon.Oliver1@westberks.gov.uk)

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