

Overview and Scrutiny Review Matrix

Review Topic: Fees and Charges

Timescale

Start: Aug 2022

Finish: Nov 2022

Review Rationale:

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 OSMC report highlighted the following as the recommended areas of focus for the Task and Finish Group:

- a. New proposals on planning income
- b. Leisure strategy and fees and income potentially arising from this
- c. Other opportunities for commercial charging in the Place Directorate

Some considerations of this review may be:

- a. What are the current fees and charges, how have they been determined, and do they deliver good value?
- b. What are the statutory constraints that affect the setting of individual fees and charges, and what scope is there to vary fees and charges from existing levels?
- c. How do West Berkshire's fees and charges and associated revenues compare to other equivalent local authorities?
- d. Are there any services that West Berkshire Council does not charge for, or does not currently provide?
- e. How do the levels of fees and charges affect demand for discretionary services and what are the likely impacts in terms of achievement of Council Strategy priorities?
- f. What do residents / services users think about current fees and charges in terms of their affordability and value for money?
- g. What is the appropriate balance between affordability and revenue generation?
- h. Are differentiated fees and charges appropriate for particular service user groups in order to address issues of access, affordability and equity?
- i. How have historic increases in fees and charges taken account of inflation, and which measure of inflation is most appropriate when determining increases?

Terms of Reference:

The Task and Finish Group will:

- **Part 1:** Proposals on Planning Income

Consider opportunities for new fees and charges associated with all aspects of the Planning Service including, but not limited to: planning enquiries; pre-planning advice; planning applications; discharge of conditions; and S106 agreement legal fees. Also consider the value associated with existing fees.

- **Part 2:** Leisure Strategy Fees and Charges

Review the existing fees and charges associated with services provided through the West Berkshire Leisure Contract with a priority of delivering value. Consider the potential to charge for additional services required to deliver the new Leisure Strategy and also consider the value associated with existing fees

- **Part 3:** Other opportunities for commercial charging

Investigate potential additional opportunities to charge for services provided by the Place and People Directorates:

- *Development & Regulation*
- *Communities & Wellbeing*
- *Environment*

Also, consider whether there are opportunities to charge for services provided in the Resources Directorate

Members will collate their findings which will then form the basis of a report to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

Review Membership:

Councillor Tony Linden
Councillor Jeff Brooks
Councillor Steve Masters
Councillor Biyi Oloko

Chairman: Councillor Tony Linden

Vice-Chairman: N/A

Scrutiny Officer: Gordon Oliver

Information Required:

Current WBC fees and charges
Current fees and charges of comparator authorities / competitors
Historic fees and charges
Trends in demand / service usage
Residents survey data
Inflation calculation methodology
Current rationale / strategy for fee changes

Documents/Evidence:

Residents Survey outcome report (2020 and 2021)
Quarterly reporting for relevant service areas

Witnesses: *(Who/Why?)*

Executive Director - Resources
Finance Manager
Service Director – Development & Regulation
Team Leader Development Control

Service Director – Communities & Wellbeing
Interim Consultant (Leisure)
Sports & Leisure Manager

Service Director – Environment
Waste Manager
Environment Delivery Manager
Countryside Manager
Asset Manager
Network Manager
Transport Services Manager

Other Service Directors and Officers as the Task Group considers appropriate

Measures Available

Suite of data sets as outlined above

Desired Outcomes:

A report with a clear set of recommendations on potential changes to fees and charges and a clear strategy for managing future increases.