

Budget Report – Presentation of Information

Ref	Proposal	Lead	Response
1	To consider amending the fees and charges appendices of the Revenue Budget Reports in future years to provide Members with additional information to support decision making:	Finance & Property	The 2023-24 budget reports on fees and charges were partially amended to include some of the proposed changes below. Further changes will be made for the 2024-25 budget reports on fees and charges to incorporate proposals (a) to (g) below.
(a)	Provide details of the level of income for each fee / charge in the preceding year and (if possible) the number of 'units sold' – where this is not possible (e.g. due to a lack of granularity in the cost centres used), revenues for groups of fees and charges should be provided.	Finance & Property	See above
(b)	<p>There should be a clear and consistent key used throughout the document to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which fees / charges are statutory with levels determined by legislation; • which fees / charges are statutory with local discretion as to the levels; • which fees / charges are discretionary and in the Council's control. 	Finance & Property	See above
(c)	There should be a short accompanying narrative to explain the rationale for any increments, decrements in fees / charges, or for keeping them unchanged – if	Finance & Property	See above

	there are variations within a group of fees / charges, the reasons for the variations should be made clear.		
(d)	The percentage increase / decrease should be provided alongside the existing and proposed fees in all cases.	Finance & Property	See above
(e)	The reason for including a particular measure of inflation should be made clear, and if there is evidence of changes in costs that are unique to a particular service that are significantly different to the general inflationary figure, then consideration should be given to tailoring proposed increases / decreases accordingly.	Finance & Property	See above
(f)	All Council departments should be required to undertake benchmarking of fees and charges on a regular basis and the report should indicated when the latest benchmarking exercised has been completed in relation to each set of fees and charges.	Finance & Property	See above
(g)	The report should provide an estimation as to the likely impact of the changes in fees and charges on the level of future income.	Finance & Property	See above

Leisure Fees and Charges

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2	Ask Leisure Service to undertake regular 'mystery shopper' exercises to ensure that online information	Leisure	A mystery shopping exercise can be regularly implemented once the new leisure contract commences in July 23. This will ensure that online

	about fees and charges provided by the new Leisure Services Contractor is up-to-date and accurate.		information is regularly reviewed and is accurate. This can be done with existing staff resources.
3	Review the West Berkshire Card concession scheme to ensure that discounts are appropriate and effectively targeted (e.g. raising the threshold for age-related discounts in line with the increase in state pension entitlement age).	Leisure	The pricing/discount structure of the West Berkshire Card concession scheme will be discussed with the new leisure contract provider once the new contract commences in July 2023.
4	Investigate the business case for investing in local leisure centres in order to make facilities more attractive and competitive with those in the private sector and neighbouring local authorities. This would allow for fees to be increased and would drive additional use and income.	Leisure	The development of the Newbury Lido at Northcroft Leisure Centre is underway and due for completion in the summer of 2023. Plans are in place for further investment at Northcroft Leisure Centre later in the year. Developments are likely to increase centre usage and this has been factored as part of the new Leisure contract pricing model. Any increase in pricing would need to be discussed with the new leisure provider and considered in relation to market forces and ensure that pricing does not become a barrier for resident usage.
5	Investigate the business case for constructing a new swimming pool to serve residents in the east of the district.	Leisure	Sport England Facilities Planning model has been used to determine demand for leisure facilities across the district. Current modelling has not indicated a requirement for additional pool facilities at this time.

Environment

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6	Investigate the business case for additional advertising contracts at Newbury Bus Station and at Henwick playing pitches.	Transport and Countryside	<p>Will hold discussions with private sector providers regarding the potential for selling additional advertising at these locations.</p> <p>Discussions will also be held with the Henwick Worthy Joint Management Committee and bus operators to ensure that proposals are workable and do not adversely affect the operation of the playing pitches and bus station. Planning will also be consulted on any proposals.</p> <p>Subject to the outcome of the above discussions, a competitive procurement process may be required to provide and sell the additional advertising space.</p> <p>Any advertising would need to be appropriate to the setting and audience (i.e. no junk food advertising at Henwick, and promotion of local businesses as far as possible).</p>
7	Seek legal advice regarding mechanisms to require that all estate roads be adopted in order to ensure they are built to an appropriate standard, while securing the appropriate inspection and supervision fees	Transport and Countryside	Discussion underway with Legal colleagues to assess whether developers can be prevented from opting not to have their roads adopted.

People Directorate

8	<p>Thoroughly look at the area of Schools Trading to understand the current proportion of academies buying services from West Berkshire Council, and consider how the Council could gain a greater proportion of academy school spending on all services, as well as maximising opportunities within maintained schools. This should be presented as a future report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.</p>	Education	<p>The Market Management Lead has reviewed the current market and range of services. Finance have confirmed that we currently sell 1,448 products to schools. Currently all academies buy services from West Berkshire Council (Education Services) as do the maintained schools. Our view is that the market is quite saturated within West Berkshire Schools.</p> <p>Assessing the full market potential i.e. which products could we sell that we are not selling, is a significant piece of work which can be undertaken by the Market Management Lead but will require a further number of weeks.</p>
9	<p>Consider the business case for bundling packages of traded services to schools, whereby schools taking all / multiple services are offered discounts, and for charging on a per-pupil basis rather than a flat rate where appropriate.</p>	Education	<p>This has been considered by the Head of Service together with John Carpenter (Market Management Lead). The traded work is mostly the selling of professional's time – subject matter experts. These are built at around cost plus 10%. If bundled we would risk running at a loss. If the price increased we would risk losing custom. On this basis the initial assessment of the case for bundling looks weak.</p> <p>We have explored charging on a per-pupil basis. We are concerned that changing the pricing structure would not be beneficial for the majority of services that involve the purchase of professional time. We could explore if there are any services where this may be appropriate.</p>

Cross-Directorate Fees and Charges

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10	All Council departments should undertake regular reviews to identify additional opportunities to charge for services. Findings should be reported to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.	Finance & Property	The accountancy team have comparative information for many of our services and this can be shared at a high level to identify potential charges; implementation of these will depend on local circumstances e.g. car parking income varies depending on where a Council is located