

Committee: **Special Council**

Date of Meeting: **6th March, 2023**

Report Subject: **Corporate Fees & Charges 2023/2024**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas – Leader/Cabinet Member
Corporate Overview & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **R Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	22/2/23						6/3/23	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to approve the fees & charges to be applied for the 2023/2024 financial year, including the core fees & charges to be operated by the Aneurin Leisure Trust.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Income Policy was agreed by Council in May 2014 and included the following:

- Relevant legislation which allows councils to generate a range of fees and charges and that income is a budget and funding tool;
- The range of areas in scope;
- Key principles such as the rationale for charging, ability to charge, service cost recovery, subsidies and concessions, trading, income collection, debt management and income management;
- A decision tree for deciding whether to charge;
- Detailed principles;
- Creation of a Fees & Charges Register; and
- Income management which included the creation of a fees and charges register.

2.2 The Bridging the Gap Programme includes a Strategic Business Review on Fees & Charges to ensure that the Council is maximising its income by ensuring fees and charges are set at a level that covers the costs of delivering the goods and services it provides where appropriate.

2.3 The current Fees and Charges register has been reviewed to:

- Ensure all fees & charges included on the register are relevant for 2023/2024
- Reflect changes in local and national policy and charges

- Reflect the assumptions included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy where appropriate.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 *To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CLT/Committees/Other groups)*

3.2 **Option 1** (Preferred Option)

3.2.1 1. Members of the Council consider and approve the register of Fees & Charges for 2023/2024 attached at Appendix 1, and the core price increases relating to Aneurin Leisure Trust attached at Appendix 2.

2. Members approve delegated power and responsibility to the Interim Director of Social Services for setting the fees and charges for 2023/2024 relating to the provision of external social care.

3.3 **Option 2**

3.3.1 1. Members of the Council consider and do not approve the register of Fees & Charges for 2023/2024 and core price increases for Aneurin Leisure Trust, and propose alternative fee increases.

2. Members do not approve the delegation to the Interim Director of Social Services for setting the fees and charges for 2023/2024 relating to the provision of external social care

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 This report supports the Corporate Plan outcome “an ambitious and innovative Council delivering the quality services at the right time and in the right place”.

4.2 Income from Fees & Charges contributes funding (approx.5%) towards delivering Council priorities and supports the Councils’ financial resilience.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1.1 The assumption in the Medium term Financial Strategy and the 2023/2024 draft estimates assumes that income budgets will remain at 2022/2023 levels and this is to mitigate any potential cost pressure arising during 2023/2024 should income levels reduce due to the cost of living crisis.

5.1.2 As a consequence of the increased costs that the Council is experiencing and is expecting to continue during 2023/2024 (8% inflationary increase), Council is asked to consider an 8% uplift to some Fees & Charges.

5.1.3 The proposed 2023/2024 register of Fees & Charges is attached at Appendix 1. The register includes the charge for 2022/2023, the proposed fee for 2023/2024 and identifies whether the proposed fee increase equates to 8% and if not, the proposed fee.

5.1.4 Fees & Charges where no fee increase is proposed:

- Markets – to encourage new market traders to take up stalls
- Regulated Fees – those fees specified by statute
- Social Services Care Fees - These fees are currently under negotiation with Providers to reflect the appropriate increase to cover the additional cost of the Real Living Wage, increase in NI Contributions, energy costs etc
- Pest Control – These fees are paid direct to the contractor
- Licensing Fees- As agreed by Licensing Committee
- Trade Waste – Annual administration charge
- Planning Fees – These will be reviewed during 2023/2024 alongside the implementation of the new planning software.

5.1.5 Fees & Charges where the uplift proposed is less than / greater than 8%:

- Trading Standards fees -12% uplift. These fees are agreed by Cymru Group Partnership of Local Authorities
- Trade Waste – an increase of 2% for residual waste collection and 6.5% for recycling collection
- Education Out of County Placements – 4% uplift in line with the increase applied to the ISB for category funding.
- Estates legal Fees – A number of legal fees have increased above 8% and additional fees added to the Register following a review of current charges to ensure a consistent approach is being applied and are appropriate.

5.1.6 Aneurin Leisure Trust has submitted a list of proposed fees and charges for 2023/2024 (attached at Appendix 2) for Core Services, to be approved by Council in line with the Funding and Management agreement. The average proposed increase is 11.75%, with increases ranging from 50.56% for Local Authority room hire to 8.88% for Junior Squash.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 Fee increases may impact on demand from residents as they continue to be impacted by the cost of living crisis. This could result in a reduction in income that the Council receives, particularly in the short term.

Demand and the impact on the budget will be monitored and reported as part of the Financial Reporting Framework.

5.2.2 Not increasing fees & charges may put pressure on income budgets not currently achieving targets. The Council will not recover the full costs of delivering services with the Council subsidising costs to individuals.

5.3 ***Legal***

5.3.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report. However, charging and trading for local authorities must comply with the Local Government Act 2003 and The Localism Act 2011.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 The proposed register of Fees & Charges is attached at Appendix 1.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

6.2.1 The setting of fees and charges on an annual basis is essential to maintaining economic resilience, however, these should be set at a cost that considers full cost recovery and what local people can afford, taking into account the protected characteristics.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

6.3.1 The review of the Fees & Charges Register has been prepared in consultation with relevant officers.

6.3.2 Services look to involve partners and citizens in consultation where possible. The impact of these charges will be reviewed throughout the year by officers, along with any issues raised by users of the services affected.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

6.4.1 Full cost recovery will support the long term financial resilience and the ability to maintain facilities and services for the people of Blaenau Gwent.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 Income generation contributes funding towards delivering Council Services and investing into early intervention and prevention activities.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.6.1 The Council works in partnership with Aneurin Leisure Trust to deliver services to the public in support of the well-being objectives.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

6.7.1 The services provided have a positive impact socially and on the health and wellbeing of those who use the facilities provided.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

N/A

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)*** *(All decisions, policy reviews or policy implementation will now require a completed Integrated Impact Assessment)*

N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 *State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements*

7.1.1 The regular review of the corporate fees and charges register is a vital component of the Council's budget setting proposal and should be monitored and refreshed to ensure it is in line with the Council's agreed income policy and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7.1.2 Actual Income achieved from Fees & Charges during the financial year will be monitored and reported to Corporate Leadership Team and Members as part of the Financial Reporting Framework.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

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