

Committee: **Special Council**

Date of Meeting: **4th March, 2021**

Report Subject: **Corporate Fees & Charges 2021/2022**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels –
Leader/Executive Member Corporate
Services**

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer
Resources**

Report Written by: **Gina Taylor – Service Manager
Accountancy**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	18/2/21						4/03/21	

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 2021/2022 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 2021/2022.
 - Reflect changes in local and national policy and charges.
 - Reflect the assumptions included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy where appropriate.
- 2.4 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the fees & charges collected during the current financial year due to e.g. the closure of services. Welsh Government has provided funding to mitigate the loss of income for 2020/2021 and it is anticipated that funding will continue into 2021/2022 as the Council continues to respond to the pandemic.
- 2.5 The longer term effect of the pandemic on the economic environment may have an impact on the Council's income given the risk of businesses closing and unemployment increasing.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CMT/Committees/Other groups)
- 3.1 **Option 1 (Preferred Option)**
- 3.1.1 Members of the Council consider and approve the register of Fees & Charges for 2021/2022 attached at Appendix 1, and the core price increases relating to Aneurin Leisure Trust attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 **Option 2**
- 3.2.1 Members of the Council consider and do not approve the Fees & Charges Register for 2021/2022 and core price increases for Aneurin Leisure Trust, and propose alternative fee increases.
4. **Evidence of how does 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 we know matter to our communities".
- 4.2 Income from Fees & Charges contributes funding 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 Medium Term Financial Strategy and the 2021/2022 draft estimates assumes:

- an inflationary uplift of 2% per annum for those income budgets where no cost pressure is identified.
- cash flat budget where income is not achieving the estimate and a cost pressure has been identified.

5.1.2 The proposed 2021/2022 register of Fees & Charges is attached at Appendix 1. The register includes the charge for 2020/2021 financial year, and identifies whether the proposed fee increase equates to:

- 2% - This uplift is proposed for a range of fees including:
 - Social Services including non-residential, residential, respite care and telecare charges
 - Skips & Scaffold Permits
 - Grounds & Playing fields
 - Highways fees
 - Charges for out of county education placements
 - School meals
 - Registrars fees including weddings & ceremonies
 - General Office Room Hire

(A) No fee increase is proposed and this is mainly due to the impact the pandemic has had on services, businesses and residents of Blaenau Gwent:

- Markets
- Trade Waste Services
- Bulky waste collection
- Cemeteries
- Estates fees including garage leases
- Regulated Fees
- Meals on wheels

(B) Other – This proposal is whereby the fee increase exceeds 2%:

- Social Services (variable) - Private Provider care charges have increased on average by 2.2% to reflect the increase in the National Living Wage.

5.1.4 The proposed fees for Licensing has been considered by the Licensing Committee and has been included in the Register for completeness. 2021/22 will be the third year the Committee has agreed no increase to the fees, if an inflationary uplift had been agreed in each of these years this would have generated an additional £10,000 over the period.

5.1.5 Aneurin Leisure Trust has submitted a list of proposed fees and charges for 2021/2022 (attached at Appendix 2) for Core Services, to be approved by Council in line with the Funding and Management agreement. The proposed increases range from no fee uplift to 3.2%.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

5.2.1 Fee increases may impact on demand and result in a decrease in income, particularly in the short term.

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

5.2.3 The impact of the pandemic on the environment and on services may continue to reduce the income that the Council receives into 2021/2022.

5.2.4 It is anticipated that Welsh Government will continue to provide financial support in 2021/2022 to mitigate cost pressures arising from reduced income levels as a result of the pandemic.

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**

5.4.1 There are no staffing implications arising out of this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 Fees and charges generate approximately £14.8m per annum in income, and contribute towards funding the cost of delivering Council services.

6.1.2 The actual income received for 2019/2020 broken down over activity is as follows:

Table 1 – Analysis of Actual Income 2019/2020

	Examples include:	£'m
Commercial Activity	Trade waste/bulky waste collection, markets, industrial units, meals on wheels, cemeteries, Property services – external works	2.08
Internal SLAs	Services provided to Schools including support services, catering and cleaning	3.13
External SLAs	Services provided to Aneurin Leisure Trust	0.26
Court Costs / Fines	Fixed Penalty Notices	0.28
Social Care Charges	Fairer Charging; Charging other Local Authorities; Continuing Health Care; Sale of property	4.48
Other	Planning, Licensing, / consortium arrangements, Recoupment, sale of school meals, RASWA etc	4.53
TOTAL		14.76

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 **EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**

6.8.1 The Strategic Business Review on Fees and Charges have been subject to screening.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

7.1 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.

7.1.1 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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