



CABINET

Tuesday, 02 January 2024

Subject	Fees and Charges for the Financial Year 2024/25
Report by	Councillor Vince Langdon-Morris Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money
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Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Cabinet a schedule of fees for discretionary services provided by the Council during the financial year April 2024 to March 2025. The report also notifies Cabinet of statutory fees chargeable during the same period, which are set by various other governing bodies.

Options:

The charges presented to Cabinet within the schedule have been recommended based on some key principles, such as customer affordability, cost recovery and commercial acumen. However, the option exists to not increase or to lower uplifts applied to fees and charges for 2024/25.

Recommendation/s:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the discretionary Fees and Charges for 2024/25, included within **Appendix A** to this report.
2. Notes the statutory Fees and Charges for 2024/25, included within **Appendix A** to this report.
3. Grants the Head of Environmental Services and Port Health delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, to determine the Port Health discretionary charges for 2024/25, once regulatory information is made available.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

None arising directly from this report.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

East Suffolk Strategic Plan.

Environmental:

None arising directly from this report.

Equalities and Diversity:

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared in respect of various service areas where fee increases are proposed. No adverse impacts have been identified.

Financial:

The fees and charges proposals are intended to broadly reflect a 3% increase despite the higher levels of inflation¹ being experienced in the 12 months to date. The financial impact of this is that inflationary pressures are therefore being managed via means other than fees and charges, where possible. Where legislation permits cost recovery of specific

¹ CPI for October 2023 according to ONS is 4.6% - [Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

services, those services are priced in line with the approach prescribed, thereby limiting the financial impact.

Human Resources:

No direct HR impact is expected to result from these proposals.

ICT:

None arising directly from this report.

Legal:

N/A

Risk:

The changing nature of the current economic climate has resulted in a current cost of living crisis, therefore, demand for discretionary services may be suppressed. As part of the annual review across discretionary services, managers have sought to balance this with the need to cover the rising cost-of-service delivery.

External Consultees:	Beach Hut and Chalet Association was consulted within 2023/24 regarding fees for beach hut related licenses and services for both Felixstowe and Sizewell.
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Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment		<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being, and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		

P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education, and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
The annual fees and charges review provides an opportunity for the Council to review the cost of delivering services and the competitiveness of its pricing strategies and propose changes to allow it to remain financially sustainable.			

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	<p>Income from fees and charges is an integral part of the financial planning process, to inform the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and acts as a key element of the annual budget setting process, forecasting the generation of essential funding for the Council to help minimise the impacts of Council Tax increases and/or service changes.</p> <p>It is vital to ensure that the annual fees and charges proposed considers local demand, along with reflecting changes in the cost of delivering the services that have either already occurred or are expected to occur over the next financial year.</p> <p>Overall, it is crucial that the charge setting process considers all financial opportunities and constraints faced by the Council, along with remaining consistent with East Suffolk's Strategic plan and relevant Government legislation, aiming to improve financial sustainability and invest in the services provided.</p>
2 Current position	
2.1	<p>Fees and charges income is a key source of revenue to the Council, providing income in the region of approximately £24 million per annum to the General Fund, including Port Health. The Council's policy is to review fees and charges annually. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy – Key Principles, states the current policy on fees and charges:</p> <p>“Increase existing fees and charges on a market forces basis whilst having regard to the Council's policies and objectives. As a minimum, fees and charges should be</p>

	<p>increased by price inflation. The Council will also review opportunities to introduce new fees as appropriate.”</p> <p>Fees and charges can be categorised into two groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretionary fees and charges for approval by Cabinet; and • Statutory fees and charges that must be set in accordance with legislation and Government regulations. <p>Following approval, the proposed fees and charges will take effect from 1 April and will be reflected within the upcoming years’ service budgets. However, if the fees and charges are set by statute these may vary per the date set by Government regulation.</p>
2.2	<p>Fees and Charges Schedule – Appendix A</p> <p>Appendix A provides a detailed breakdown of the fees and charges for the 2024/25 financial year to be applied by the individual services within the Authority. The fee schedule includes both discretionary and statutory charges and details the proposed charges. The recommended minimum uplift is 3% where appropriate, based on the forecast for CPI over the next twelve months.</p>
2.3	<p>Discretionary fees and charges</p> <p>Discretionary fees represent services which the Council has the power, but not the duty, to provide. Overall, the income generated is restricted to the cost of providing the service but is not restricted on how the costs are calculated, so are an important part of enabling the Council to invest in the services provided. Charges identified as discretionary may also include some statutory services, for which the council sets fees based on legislation, but where there is discretion on how the pricing is set.</p> <p>The proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A, have been set taking account of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where only the full cost of service provision can be charged, the fee or charge reflects the full cost, including an apportionment of support service costs. • Where the discretionary fee or charge is set at the market rate, these have been benchmarked and set at the appropriate rate considering demand for the service but ensuring that any competitive advantage is neutralised if in competition with the private sector. • Opportunities to introduce new fees as appropriate. • Consideration of the impact of fee change on the use of the services. • Other discretionary fees and charges which do not fall into any of the above, are increased by 3%. The target rate is below the forecast 5.0% inflation rate for the end of the 2023 calendar year. <p>Building Regulation charges are no longer published at the request of the Head of Planning and Coastal Management. This is because there is considerable competition from the private sector for the provision of this service and the publication of the Council’s charges in this area would result in the Building Regulation service facing a competitive disadvantage and loss of income.</p>

2.4

Fees and charges which have been subject to key changes contained within **Appendix A** are highlighted below.

Environmental health (Appendix A, section 1): New charges have been introduced in recognition of the additional effort required to regulate new activities for protection of residents. An administration charge is also now introduced in recognition of the resource required to deliver public health funerals.

Dog control administration and kennelling fees are proposed to increase from £40 and £17, to £42 and £18.

Safer Food, Better Business fees have a proposed uplift of 4.55%, increased to reflect the need to recover costs. The average fee impact totals £1.

Additional Fixed penalty notices have been raised within 2024/25 for both fly tipping and offences regarding commercial waste receptacles, proposed standard penalties totalling £150 and £100. An additional set charge of £562.50 is also proposed for the seizure of noise making equipment without prosecution. Following the return of the enforcement service in house within 2023/24. The costs and administration requirements have been closely monitored and fees adjusted and added accordingly.

Port Health (Appendix A, section 1.15): Suffolk Coastal Port health service has completed an in-depth time and study motion to identify the actual costs of delivering the services, to ensure cost recovery is achieved.

Vessel inspection fees currently reflect a nil increase from 2023/24 but are currently set in accordance with APHA. Further guidance is expected within 2024.

Some charges are heavily reliant on published information which is not yet available so fees may be subject to a small increased prior to the implementation on 1 April 2024.

Licences (Appendix A, section 2): The majority of the discretionary fees have been increased by 3%, and many of the statutory fees are subject to no change.

Parking services (Appendix A, section 4.1): Core parking service fees which came into force on 21 August 2020 remain unchanged. Suspension fees relating to both Off-street and On-street parking places have continued to remain the same following evidence indicating it takes a similar level of resource to process both. In allocated areas season and annual tickets will be made available to reflect changing demand patterns. The 2024/25, fees also exclude sites such as The Elms and Framlingham, due to them no longer being within the authority's ownership.

Household waste services (Appendix A, section 4.3): Waste services have been impacted significantly by inflationary pressures post pandemic, predominantly rising fuel, gate fees and staffing cost increases. East Suffolk Council are working alongside East Suffolk Services Limited (ESSL) to continually review the overall costs of supplying services to ensure the services remain efficient, effective and reflect good value for money.

For 2024/25 charges, It is proposed that household waste charges for bulky items are increased by the recommended 3%, following higher uplifts in prior years.

Garden Waste services have been impacted significantly by inflationary pressures. Therefore, the proposal is to increase the garden waste collection service fee by £1.50 or 5%, to £52.50, to support the cost of delivering the service.

Finally, developer bin delivery charges are proposed to increase significantly to reflect the rising costs of fuel and staffing costs following a review of the services provided by East Suffolk Services Limited (ESSL), an increase of £45 to £75. This service was previously operating at a loss, with the uplift reflecting to true cost of providing the service.

Southwold harbour and caravan-camp site (Appendix A, Section 4.5 & 4.4): The Southwold Harbour Management Committee considered the proposed fees and charges at its meeting on 9 November and are recommended to Cabinet in a separate report. Following the committee decision, the fees are detailed within the attached appendices factoring a 3% uplift.

Recreation and outdoor sports (Appendix A, section 4.6): Following the work completed within 2023/24 to re-align fees across East Suffolk for both North and South of the district, the recommended approach for 2024/25 is to uplift fees by the recommended 3%. The Felixstowe Cricket and Rugby Pitches have been removed following a new lease agreement between the Council and Felixstowe Sports Club to lease the facilities directly.

Following recent announcements from HMRC surrounding VAT implications for public authority leisure services, detailed within **Appendix A**, charges may be subject to further VAT adjustments prior to the publication in the new financial year.

Beach huts & chalets (appendix A, section 4.8): A 5% increase has been agreed with the Beach Huts Association for the licence of beach hut sites in Sizewell, Felixstowe and Lowestoft. Fee uplifts of 5% have also been applied to Felixstowe chalets for 2024/25.

New additional beach hut rentals were included from 2023/24 reflecting the huts which the Council has recently build or brought back in house from third party operators. As these are new, the Council is still working to balance the pricing with its regeneration ambitions in the area. Therefore, for 2024/25, no price increase has been proposed for these beach hut rentals.

New fees have been introduced for 2024/25 following the addition of new Seashore Village Accessible Beach Chalets.

Cemeteries (Appendix A, section 4.9): The recommended 3% uplift has been applied to all services provided by Cemeteries, including Green Burial and Commemorative Benches with the exclusion of exhumations. The charge in relation to exhumation's has been proposed to increase from £1,203, to £2,340. The proposed fee uplift reflects the historic nature of the original charge and

following a review, the new charge factors the current costs associated with providing the service.

Oulton Broad Yacht Station (Appendix A, section 4.12): Visitor moorings for 24-hour periods have proposed increased in order to remain in line with equivalent service providers. Water top up charges are proposed to increase by £1, to £2, the first uplift in eight years. Weekly Buoy charges are proposed to increase from £40, to £45, which equates to an increase of £0.71 per day.

Planning Applications and Planning Related Applications (Appendix A, section 5.5): The fees for Planning Applications and for Planning related applications are set by National Government through The Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012, which have been amended more than once. The latest of changes were made 8 November 2023 and came into force 6 December 2023.

The latest amendments to the Regulations included significant complex changes, resulting in significant increases to fees of up to 25% or 35%, but also included the insertion of additional fee thresholds and as a result, different payment levels for each threshold. Therefore, no direct correlation remains between prior financial years for the fee rate categories provided. Based on these changes, fees have been removed from the schedule and translated into a simpler format embedded within the fees and charges document.

The 2023 amendments to the fee regulations also introduced a new process for future adjustments to the planning fees. They are to be indexed linked as of 1 April 2025, so will likely increase year on year from that time. However, they will remain to be set nationally, and officers expect that the adjusted fees will be published annually on a national basis; the timing for those fees lists remains unknown.

Public path orders & agreements (Appendix A, section 5.6): Public path orders and agreements can only be recharged at cost. A review was undertaken between districts, which identified that the average fee was significantly higher than the fee presented within the fees and charges information. For 2024/25, it is proposed that the hourly charge is revised to £74, an increase of £9.17 and the initial applicant fee is revised from £400 to £500.

Housing services (Appendix A, Section 6): Housing continues to review and improve the services offered ensuring that services are completed on a cost recovery basis in order to remain sustainable. Using this rationale, park home fees propose increases of 5.93% for processing, inspections and the issue or amendments of licences.

Enforcement fees are also proposed to increase from £59 to £62.50 plus officer time.

For 2024/25, additional charges have been introduced to support the increased administration need, assisting with Energy efficiency installers ECO4 declarations. Additional charges have also been raised to support the administration of Shared Ownership facilities, minimising the financial impact within the Housing Revenue Fund (HRA).

2.5	<p>Statutory fees and Charges – Appendix A</p> <p>Appendix A contains fees and charges that have been set by legislation or by organisations other than the Council and are clearly indicated within the Fee Status column as ‘ST’. Therefore, there is no requirement to make pricing decisions on the services listed and are therefore gathered into a repository for ease of reference for residents.</p>
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3 How to address current situation

3.1	<p>Cabinet is asked to consider and approve the schedule of Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A and to note the schedule of Statutory Charges as set out in Appendix A. The date for implementation of the discretionary fees is 1 April 2024, unless otherwise stated.</p>
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4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	<p>To set the Council’s discretionary fees and charges from 1 April 2024, considering significant inflationary pressures, changes to services and the operating environment of the Council.</p>
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Appendices

Appendices:

Appendix A	Fees and Charges 2024/25
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Background reference papers:

None.
