



**OPEN REPORT  
GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

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**Governance and Resources Committee – 15 February 2024**

**FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2024/25**

**Joint Report of the Director of Resources, Director of Community and Environmental Services, Director of Regulatory Services and Director of Corporate and Customer Services**

**Report Authors and Contact Details**

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**Wards Affected**

District Wide

**Report Summary**

This report seeks approval for proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 in respect of Community and Environmental Services, Corporate and Customer Services and Regulatory Services.

**Recommendation**

That the fees and charges recommended in Appendices 1 – 13 of the report are approved and implemented with effect from 1 April 2024, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

**List of Appendices**

Schedules of Proposed Fees

Appendix 1	Public Conveniences, Pest Control and Dog Control
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Appendix 2	Waste and Recycling
Appendix 3	Cemeteries
Appendix 4	Agricultural Business Centre – Room Hire
Appendix 5	Stall Markets and Farmers’ Markets
Appendix 6	Parks, Recreation Grounds and Public Spaces
Appendix 7	Car Parks
Appendix 8	Events
Appendix 9	Corporate Services
Appendix 10(a)(b)(c)	Environmental Health
Appendix 11	Licensing
Appendix 12	Estates and Facilities
Appendix 13	Planning Pre-application Advice
Appendix 14	Equality Impact Assessment for New dog control call out fee.
Appendix 15	Equality Impact Assessment for Cricket Pitch Hire Fees

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration of report by Council or other committee**

Not applicable

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from Press or Public**

No

## **Fees and charges for 2024/25**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to consider an annual review of the fees and charges for services provided across the Council.
- 1.2 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 4.0% in December 2023, the last figures available at the time of writing this report.
- 1.3 In recent years fees and charges have been increased, in general, by an amount that slightly exceeds inflation rates at the time. Charging above the current rate of inflation will generate higher levels of income in real terms and will assist in balancing the budget for 2024/25 given the significant inflationary increases on Council spending. On the other hand, increases higher than current levels of inflation might not be acceptable to the public at these times of a cost-of-living crisis and might result in customer resistance, leading to a potential loss of income. Therefore, service managers have used their knowledge of their services and customers to set the proposed fees and charges.
- 1.4 Where officers have recommended fee increases of more than 4% or that fees be frozen at the 2023/24 level, an explanation has been provided in the report.
- 1.5 Appendices 1 – 13 contain schedules of the existing and recommended charges.

### **2. Report for 2024/25**

#### **2.1 Community and Environmental Services**

**Appendix 1** details the existing and proposed fees and charges for Public Conveniences, Pest Control and Dog Control.

It is proposed that the 20p fee for the use of public conveniences is retained. There is a Public Convenience Working Group who will be reviewing the fees of the facilities this financial year along with many other aspects of the service.

The recommended fees for dog control include an increase of around 10%. The fee increase reflects the increased cost of looking after stray dogs and it is recommended that this is passed on to owners. There is a new fee of £50 for a call out charge.

The Pest Control service remains suspended as it wasn't commercially viable. However, as referenced in the Clean and Green Service Report in July, there is a commitment from officers to review commercial aspects of the service. Pest control will form part of the evaluation. This will take place once the structural changes and performance monitoring mechanism have been established and a report will be presented to Elected Members.

**Appendix 2** details charges for waste and recycling collections. The recommended fees include an average increase of around 8% with the key changes as follows:

- It is proposed that subscriptions to the Garden Waste Collection Service be increased by 12% to £56 p.a. from £50.00, which was the price agreed by Members in 2019 for year 1 of the garden waste subscription scheme. These prices were retained in year 2 following the HGV shortage and Covid and in year 3 for service disruption from Serco. This proposed charge for 2024/25 reflects increases in the collection charges from Serco and in disposal costs.
- It is proposed that the charges for bulky collections should increase by 6% to 10% to pass on relevant increases in charges from the waste collection contractor.
- Charges for new or replacement wheeled bins will increase by 5% to 8% to bring them in line with the supplier's charges.
- Charges to collect trade and commercial waste have been increased by 6.5% to 10% to pass on relevant increases in charges from the waste collection contractor and for waste disposal.
- It is proposed that the charges for commercial clinical waste should increase by 10%, to reflect the charge that the Council receives from Serco and for waste disposal. The increase means the Council will not continue to subsidise this service.

**Appendix 3** Memorial bench fees have been retained this year, so will be the same as the charges in 2023/24.

**Appendix 4** details the existing and recommended fees and charges in respect of room hire at the Bakewell Agricultural Business Centre. The recommended fees include an increase of 5%, with the exception of the Conference Room hire.

It is proposed that the conference room hire fee is frozen at the current price as this has been highlighted as a key area that could help the ABC to increase bookings. The team plan to improve the offer available to conference room hirers including improved Wi-Fi, refreshments, décor and marketing approach.

**Appendix 5** details the existing fees and charges and those recommended for approval with effect from 1st April 2024 in respect of Bakewell stall market and Famers' Market.

In December 2024 a price comparison exercise was undertaken to compare the 2023/24 pricing structure with mix of local and similar occupancy level markets. The results are shown in the table below:

Market	Stall size	Price	Stall Set up
<b>Bakewell</b>	<b>9ft/12ft</b>	<b>£26.30/£34.20 Erected</b>	<b>Erected</b>
Chesterfield	8ft/12ft	£9.70 - £20.10 Fixed	Fixed
Ormskirk	10' x 4'	£27.50	Self-erect
Louth	10ft	£15.00	Erected
Loughborough	10ft	£28.00	N/A
Retford	10ft	£14.50	Erected
Stamford	10ft	£23.85	Erected
Beverley	12ft	£25.00	Self-erect
Beverley	12ft	£54.00	Erected

- It is proposed that market stall rents (for the stall market and farmers' markets) are again frozen for 2024/25 to help retain and offer some support to current traders and encourage new traders. Bakewell Monday Stall Market and monthly Farmers Market continue to be successful markets even though they have seen a decline in trader numbers since the pandemic. Based on the price comparison above Bakewell Market is one of the more expensive markets though still competitive based on the size of market, which might not be the case in rents were to increase. A number of the markets above have also frozen their prices over the last few years.
- Large Markets continue, in the main to see a decline. It's apparent from talking to traders at our own markets, other markets and the National Market Traders Federation that the cost of living crisis continues to effect traders both in terms of their costs (travel, stock) and customer spend which is resulting in a decline in market traders.
- An increase of 7.1% is proposed for stall market and farmers' market parking (for traders) and an increase of 10% (£5 to £5.50) is recommended for casual traders.

**Appendix 6** details the existing fees and charges and those recommended for approval with effect from 1st April 2024 in respect of parks, recreation grounds and public spaces. The recommended fees include increases ranging from 0% to 17.75%.

There is a proposed increase of 17.75% on the charge for the hire of a football /rugby pitch at Ashbourne Recreation Ground. This is due to bringing the prices for all pitch bookings (cricket, rugby and football) in Ashbourne in line and consistent with those across other facilities in the District, but without charging for the use of the Pavilion. Bookings for the Pavilion are booked directly with the Pavilion Group.

Charges for Fixed Penalty Notices relating to PSPO's and the Environmental Protection Act have been frozen.

### **Leisure Centres**

Under the terms of the contract with Freedom Leisure, responsibility for setting fees and charges for leisure centres transferred to them from 1 August 2018. The next price increase is due in April 2024 once approved by the District Council's Contract Manager. At the time of writing this report details of these price increases had not been received.

**Appendix 7** outlines fees relating to car parking permits, passes and season tickets.

Car parking fees and charges are currently being reviewed by the Car Parking Member Group and any changes will be reported to a future Council on the 4th April. Therefore, no changes are proposed in this report.

**Appendix 8** outlines fees relating to events. An average increase of 2.3% is recommended.

The fees for Matlock Bath Illuminations will be discussed and agreed by the Illuminations working group, with fees recommended to the relevant committee at a later date.

## 2.2 Corporate and Customer Services

**Appendix 9** details the current fees and charges and those recommended for the various streams within Corporate and Customer Services.

For Local Land Charges, the level of fees charged by the District Council must also accord with the Local Authorities (England) (Charges for Property Searches) Regulations 2008. The Regulations specify that the charge made in connection with a property search must not amount to more than the actual cost of providing the service. Increases of 6.5% to 9.3% are recommended.

Charges for legal services have been reviewed and brought up to date. The average proposed fee increase is 7.8%. The fee for authorising proof of life for overseas pensioners is recommended to increase by 9.38% from £32.00 to £35.00. This is a discretionary service and the proposed increase reflects inflation and will not reduce the number of individuals wishing to take advantage of the service.

The proposed fees and charges for street naming and numbering and Section 106 Monitoring have been increased by 10% to reflect inflation; fees for road closures are recommended to be increased by 6% to 8%.

## 2.3 Regulatory Services

**Appendix 10** details the existing fees and charges and, those recommended for approval with effect from 1st April 2024 in respect of food hygiene, private sector housing and private water supplies. Recommended fees have been increased by 6%.

**Appendix 11** details the existing fees and charges and, those recommended for approval with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 in respect of licensing. Proposed fee increases (for locally set licensing fees) range from 0% to 7.6%.

**Appendix 12** sets out a proposed schedule of charges for the services provided by our Estates and Facilities Team. It is proposed that these charges be increased by 8%. The Council offers a reduction in these fees where the work relates to temporary installations on District Council land by town and parish councils and no charge is levied in relation to work on community asset transfers or emergency works licences.

**Appendix 13** sets out fees for Planning Pre-application Advice. An average increase of 6.1% is recommended to cover the additional costs of providing this service.

## 3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 A range of fee increases was calculated for consideration (from 1% to 10% in 1% increments) for all fees and charges. Service managers also considered other options for their services where appropriate, including freezing fees at the 2023/24 level. When considering significant increases, service managers haven taken account of potential customer resistance, especially given the current cost-of-living crisis.

3.2 One option would be to freeze all fees and charges at the 2023/24 level. However, that would not reflect the increased costs that the Council faces where fees are intended to cover costs. Increasing fees and charges will contribute towards balancing the budget for 2024/25 and achieving a sustainable financial position.

## 4. Consultation

4.1 The fees will be publicised after approval by this committee.

## 5. Timetable for Implementation

5.1 The proposed fees are due to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2024, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

## 6. Policy Implications

6.1 The Council charges fees to cover the cost of some of the services that are provided to make progress in delivering its Corporate Priorities.

## **7. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 The proposed increases are mostly in the range of 0% to 10%, with most being around 6% to 8%. In March 2023, the Council approved a corporate savings target to identify efficiency savings and/or additional income of £286,000 a year by 2024/25. It was reported to Council on 14 December that the potential budget deficit for 2024/25 was forecast to be £422,000. The budget deficit is forecast For financial years beyond 2024/25 is expected to increase significantly due to inflationary pressures and expected reductions in government grants. Increasing fees and charges will help to close the funding budget deficit.
- 7.2 It should be acknowledged that inflation is falling. The Monetary Policy Report of November 2023 shows that the Bank of England predicts that CPI will average 3.25% in 2024 and 2% in 2025.
- 7.3 Income resulting from the recommended revised fees and charges will be included in the draft revenue spending proposals for the financial year 2024/25 to be considered at the (budget setting) meeting of the full Council on 29 February 2024.
- 7.4 While some fees have been frozen, most are proposed to be increased by 6% to 8% with garden waste subscriptions proposed to increase by 12%. It is hoped that customer resistance to the proposed fee increases will not be significant (see paragraph 11.1 below).
- 7.5 The financial risk is therefore assessed as low.

## **8. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 This report seeks approval for proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 in respect of Community and Environmental Services, Corporate and Customer Services and Regulatory Services.
- 8.2 Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 enables the Council to provide and charge for recreational facilities in its area.
- 8.3 Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 enables the Council to charge for a discretionary service where the recipient agrees to its provision. The Council is afforded ability to charge by statute. This report is updating those fees and charges.
- 8.4 The recommended decision to be made connected to this report is to implement the new fees and charges. Therefore, the risk in relation to the report's recommendations has been assessed at the current time as low.

## **9. Equalities Implications**

- 9.1 When considering equalities implications for the Council, as well as protected characteristics, we consider the higher levels of poverty



experienced by some residents in this rural area due to high cost, poor quality housing stock, and the lower-than-average earnings. Increases in fees will impact on the ability of some residents to access services, particularly where fee increases are above inflation. It could be argued that incomes for some residents have not increased in line with inflation.

9.2 **Appendix 14** shows the Equality Impact Assessment for New Dog Control Fee.

9.3 **Appendix 15** shows the Equality Impact Assessment for Cricket Pitch Hire Fee Increases

## 10. Climate Change Implications

10.1 There are no perceived climate change impacts of the changes to fees and charges recommended in the report.

## 11. Risk Management

11.1 There is a risk that the proposed fee increases may result in customer complaints and higher levels of resistance than expected, leading to a shortfall in income against budget. It is hoped that this risk is mitigated by managers taking customer resistance into account when setting proposed fees. Therefore, this risk is assessed as low.

### Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from:-

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	12/02/2024
Director of Resources (S.151 Officer)	Karen Henriksen	12/02/2024
Director of Corporate & Customer Services (Monitoring Officer)	Helen Mitchell	12/02/2024