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| Date of Meeting | 26 th February |
| Portfolio | Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance |
| Report Author | Julie Murphy |
| Public/Private Document | Public |

Discretionary Fees & Charges

Executive Summary

- 1.1 During the years of austerity there have been significant increases to the level of Fees and Charges, which have resulted in pressures across some income budgets. Therefore the budget assumptions agreed by Cabinet on 30th July 2019 included a nil increase for 2020/21.
- 1.2 Services were requested to review the level of their charges to identify any opportunities to increase charges above nil inflation, in order to contribute towards bridging the budget gap.
- 1.3 At 29th October Cabinet considered the report with the proposed fees and charges by service for 2020/21 detailing any fees and charges above the 0% general uplift together with a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee that fees and charges should be increased in line with inflation, subject to rounding, with the exception of bereavement services. This was agreed by Members.
- 1.4 This report details the increased fees and charges which generates £73k towards the funding gap.
- 1.5 The proposal to implement Replacement Bin Charges has been subject to an ongoing public consultation which ended on 2nd February. A report detailing the outcome of consultation will be submitted to Cabinet.

Recommendation

- 2.1 Council approves the updated Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2020/21 following consultation, including the additional exemptions requested in section 4.3.
- 2.2 Cabinet approves that a report detailing the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to implement Replacement Bin Charges be submitted to Cabinet.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 At 29th October Cabinet considered the report with the proposed fees and charges by service for 2020/21 detailing any fees and charges above the 0% general uplift together with a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee that fees and charges should be increased in line with inflation with the exception of bereavement services.
- 3.2 It is also recommended not to apply inflation to other areas as detailed in paragraph 4.3.

Key Points for Consideration

- 4.1 The Authority carries out an annual review of discretionary fees and charges as part of the budget setting process. It is a requirement of this process that Elected Members agree an appropriate general level of increase. For the 2020/21 financial year, Cabinet on 30th July approved a 0% increase.
- 4.2 At 29th October Cabinet, Members approved a recommendation tabled on the night to increase charges in line with inflation, with the exception to services relating to bereavement.
- 4.3 The amended proposed fee levels for the 2020/21 financial year, which take into account rounding, are included in Appendix 1.

After consultation with services, it is requested that inflation not be applied to the following areas

Car Parking – Budget Pressure funding has been provided to the service in previous financial years. Increasing the charges is likely to bring further financial pressures to the service.

Facilities Management Charges – Budget Pressure funding has been provided to the service in previous financial years. Increasing the charges is likely to bring further financial pressures to the service.

Taxi Licenses – There is impending legal challenge of Local Authorities and, based on an extensive benchmarking exercise, it is recommended that fees remain static to mitigate legal challenge and any cost award.

Land Charges – Based on Greater Manchester benchmarking, there is a risk that by increasing the cost of search fees this will create future budget pressures.

Liability Orders – In line with Government guidance, current charges cover the cost incurred. A further increase is not recommended.

Careline/Support@Home – These Adult Care charges are subject to an ongoing tender exercise and will be reported to Cabinet in a separate paper.

Town Hall Meeting Rooms – Due to closure of Town Hall in 2020, no uplifts have been applied.

- 4.4 The proposal to implement Replacement Bin Charges has been subject to a public consultation, which end on 2nd February. The Council is considering introducing a charge of £20 per bin for all new or replacement waste and recycling bins. Currently across Greater Manchester authorities all councils with the exception of Rochdale charge for new or replacement refuse bins, with three of the ten councils charging for recycling bins too. There would be a number of exemptions from the charges and the consultation sought views on the charges and possible exemptions.

4.5 **Alternatives Considered**

The alternative is not to review or increase our fees and charges. This would potentially reduce the income available to the Council and make it more difficult to achieve a balanced budget.

Costs and Budget Summary

- 5.1 A full list of all proposed fees and charges for 2020/21 are included in appendix 1.
- 5.2 Taking into account the exceptions mentioned in 4.2 and 4.3, the proposal to increase charges in line with inflation is forecast to generate £73k per annum. If Replacement Bin charges are implemented after the completion of consultation this will generate further income of £189k in 2020/21. This is a proposal that is being dealt with outside the Savings Programme.

Risk and Policy Implications

6. The Service has reviewed its charges against relevant legislation to ensure that all transactions remain compliant with the relevant statutes governing Local Authority activities.

Consultation

7. All services engage with the production of the proposed charges identified within this report. The Leadership Team, Cabinet Member for Finance, and opposition Portfolio holder for Finance and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been informed of the proposed charges for 2020/21.

Background Papers

Place of Inspection

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| 8. Background papers to this report can be obtained from Stuart Smith | Number 1 Riverside Floor 2 |
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For Further Information Contact:

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