

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 21ST FEBRUARY 2024

MINUTE EXTRACT OF THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2024 IN RESPECT OF ITEM 14(B) ON THE COUNCIL AGENDA

31. REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2024-25

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive (circulated previously) regarding the review of Charges and Fees for 2024/25 together with Minute Extract of Strategy and Resources on 5th February 2024.

The Finance Manager highlighted the following:

- The change in fees charged for services provided by the Council was in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The charges for the provision of services were reviewed annually in the context of policy guidance within the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and the recommended levels of increase to produce a target income level.
- This year the guidance was to increase fees and charges by 5%, although some fees were set by statute and these would be set nationally. Other variations to the 5% increase were set out in sections 4.3 to 4.11 of the report.
- Building Control fees had been raised by an average of 6.7% and rounded to the nearest pound, this was to ensure that revenue income recouped the actual cost of providing the service and were competitive in the sector. Details of this could be seen in Appendix B of the report.
- Land Charges fees had been set to recoup the cost of providing the service, the recommended fees for the land charges service was estimated to recover all the costs and break even, as detailed at Appendix D of the report.
- There were two changes to the Environmental Health fees, as the majority of these were set by statute or set to recover costs. The introduction of a fee for “Film Classification Certificate” and variation to the “Export Health Certificate” fee to ensure the cost of providing the service is fully recovered, as detailed at Appendix E of the report.
- Pannier Market (Venue hire) – Following the recent refurbishment and new facilities within the Pannier Market the Council now offered an enhanced look and feel to the market and had varied the prices to reflect the venue offer, the revised prices were now in line with other similar venues, as detailed in Appendix H (b) Venue of the report.
- Bulky Waste Collections – To increase the fees as follows:

As detailed in Appendix I of the report:

- Up to 2 items £30.00 (30.43% increase).
- Up to 3 items £38.00 (22.58% increase).
- Up to 4 items £45.00 (18.42% increase).

- The proposed increases above brought the Council's charges in line with our neighbouring authorities.
- Garden Waste – Increase in fee of £5, this level of charge was similar to the charges made by other Devon councils and ensured the cost of providing the service was recovered by the income as seen at Appendix J of the report.
- Estates Event Licence fee – The licence for both charity and Commercial events on the Council's land had been set to recover the cost of administering the licence fee, as detailed in Appendix M of the report.
- Estates Contractors Works licence - This was a new fee for 2024-25 and was set to recover the cost of administering the new licence fee, details could be seen in Appendix N of the report.
- Modification of S106 agreements - This was a new fee for 2024-25 and was set to recover the cost of administering the new licence fee, as detailed in Appendix O of the report.
- The net revenue changes from the above charges were estimated to produce £221,000 of additional income, which had been included within the draft 2024/25 revenue budget for consideration.

Following the presentation of the Review of Fees and Charges for services for 2024/25, the Committee discussed, debated and received explanation in relation to the following:

- **Bulky Waste collections:** Concerns were raised regarding the increased risk of fly tipping that might result from increasing the fees.

In reviewing the fee for bulky waste collections, the Council had looked what other local authorities were charging for their bulky waste collections. In order to deliver an effective and fair service the Council was required to cover their costs and the exercise revealed that their fees were in sync with other Councils. The income figure for bulky waste collections formed part of the domestic waste figures. However, the Committee could be provided with a breakdown of the income generated by the bulky waste collection service should they wish.

- **Modifications to Section 106 Agreements:** They questioned the new proposed fee for modifications to Section 106 agreements for 2024/25 and challenged if it should be a blanket approach for all types and sizes of development.

The Service Manager had reviewed the level of charges as not many Councils charged for modifications to Section 106 agreements. She assessed the fees that were charged by Cornwall Council and came to the conclusion that there should be a charge set for amendments to Section 106 agreements for major planning applications of more than 10 dwellings (to be confirmed by Development Manager). This would ensure that costs were covered for both Planning officer's time and the legal fees that were involved and reflected the amount of work and officer time that went into modifications to Section 106 agreements.

- **Biodiversity Net Gain:** The increase of 10% on biodiversity net gain on applications of 30 dwellings or more and who would calculate the fees.

The Sustainability Officer and his team were responsible for calculating fees for biodiversity net gain on planning application sites of 30 dwellings or more.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the decisions and recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee be endorsed;
- b) That the income figure for bulky waste collections be provided together with a breakdown of the income generated by the bulky waste collection service;
- c) That a summary of fees charged for bulky waste collections for all public and private sector providers be emailed out to the Committee members prior to Full Council on 21st February 2024; and
- d) That the proposal to charge a new fee for modifications to Section 106 agreements be accepted and monitored over a 12 month period, subject to:
 - i. The Service Manager providing an overview the Committee members of the parameters used for modifications to Section 106 agreements.