

CABINET

12 February 2013

This report is submitted under Agenda Item 7. The Chair will be asked to decide if it can be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency under the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order not to delay the implementation of new fees and charges with effect from 1 April 2013.

Title: Fees and Charges 2013/14	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
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Summary: Local Authorities are involved in a wide range of services and the ability to charge for some of these services has always been a key funding source to Councils. This report concerns itself with recommending the appropriate level of fees and charges for the 2013/14 financial year for those services where the Council has decided to set fees. In preparing the proposed fees and charges, Directorates have worked within the framework of the agreed relevant Charging Policy. Some of the service savings proposals for 2013/14 require increases in fees and charges. In addition to departmental savings, Cabinet has also approved an average 3% corporate increase across all fees and charges that are within the Councils control. The corporate target has been set at an assumed level of achievability of 75%, in order to allow for areas where it is not feasible or realistic to increase fees. Therefore the recommended increases in fees and charges for 2013/14 contained within this report will be reflected in the 2013/14 budget strategy and the 2013/14 departmental budgets. The proposed charges for 2013/14 are detailed in Appendix A to this report. The proposed deletion of current fees and charges are detailed in Appendix B to this report.	

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Agree the proposed fees and charges as set out in at Appendix A to the report, to be effective from 1 April 2013;
- (ii) Note the fees and charges no longer applicable from 31 March 2013, as set out in Appendix B;
- (iii) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Cabinet Members for Finance and Education, regarding the setting of fees and charges which are applied from September for schools and academic year based activities.

Reason(s)

The setting of appropriate fees and charges will enable the Council to generate essential income for the funding of Council services.

The approval of reviewed fees and charges to ensure that the Council is competitive with other service providers and neighbouring councils.

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Councils are involved in a wide range of services and the ability to charge for some of these services has always been a key funding source. The types of services provided by the Council where fees and charges are currently levied often fall into a broad category of traditional income generating services.
- 1.2 The income generating services contain both statutory and discretionary services. Where fees and charges apply to mandatory services, these are often set nationally, for example planning fees. The majority of mandatory services are not funded directly from fees and charges but instead from the Council's main income sources, i.e. Government grant and Council Tax revenue. Examples of services funded in this way are Highway Maintenance, Children's Services, Cleansing and Domestic Refuse services.
- 1.3 The remaining income services where the Council levies fees and charges are of a discretionary nature. These cover a whole range of services such as Care services, Libraries, Licensing, Pest Control, Commercial Waste, Drainage, Markets, Leisure and Recreation facilities and Parking and the Registrar service. This report concerns itself with recommending the appropriate level of fees and charges for 2013/14 for these types of services.
- 1.4 In addition to those traditional income services, the Council also has the power under the Local Government Act 2003 to charge for other discretionary services that it may already provide or may wish to provide in the future.
- 1.5 There is no definitive list as to which discretionary services are covered by the powers provided in the Act although the Government has provided limited examples of what could be included, such as maintenance of older/disabled peoples' gardens,

arboriculture work in private gardens, operating consumer protection approved lists, pre-application planning and development advice, highway services to private industrial estates, home energy advice, home security services and use of excess capacity in local authority services.

- 1.6 To date, in keeping with most other local authorities, the Council has not expanded use of these powers but will continue to review the potential to do so when there is a sound business case to do so.

2.0 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013/14

- 2.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2013/14 assumes an overall increase of £192k from increases in fees & charges. This equates to an average increase of 3% across all fees that are within the Authority's control, which is broadly in line with inflation (Retail Price Index - RPI). The 3% has also been capped at 75% in order allow for areas where it is not possible to achieve increases (this therefore reduces the actual average corporate increase to 2.25%).
- 2.2 Every year Corporate Directors need to assess those services which warrant higher or lower increases in fees and charges to reflect the achievement of their overall budgets, the economic climate and market conditions. In addition, some savings proposals planned for 2013/14 require increases in fees and charges.

3.0 Charging Policy

- 3.1 The Council has an agreed Charging Policy which requires that all charges are reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process.
- 3.2 The Charging Policy has three fundamental principles:
- Services should raise income wherever there is a power or duty to do so;
 - The income raised should cover the full costs of providing the service including all overheads;
 - Any departures from this policy must be justified in a transparent manner with reference to the Council's priorities and policies.
- 3.3 In preparing the proposed fees and charges for 2013/14 Directorates have worked within the framework of the MTFs and the Charging Policy.

4.0 Proposed Fees and Charges for 2013/14

- 4.1 Attached to this report at Appendix A are the proposed fees and charges for 2013/14 which will be effective from 1 April 2013.
- 4.2 The Appendix details the following information:
- Description of service provided;
 - Current 2012/13 charge;
 - Proposed 2013/14 charge;
 - Proposed increase in pounds and in percentage terms;
 - The rationale for a given increase, as well as any other comments.

4.3 A summary of the services that Appendix A relates to is presented within the following sections. The reference numbers quoted below relate the line reference numbers on Appendix A.

5.0 Adult & Community Services (Ref 1 – 391)

5.1 The Directorate has taken account of a number of factors in establishing the level of increase in fees from April 2013, including inflation, market conditions and current income levels. For adult social care an exercise has been undertaken to establish accurate unit costs for the purposes of personal budget holders purchasing services directly in adult social care. Further detail and explanations from specific service areas within the Directorate are provided below.

5.2 Adult Social Care (Ref 1 – 8)

5.2.1 In regard to care and support provided in the community, the authority's Fairer Contributions Policy, which was implemented in October 2011 after approval by Cabinet, is used to calculate charges based on service costs and income. Further details can be obtained from the report presented to Cabinet on 12 June 2011.

5.2.2 Income currently generated through the Fairer Contributions Policy will potentially be adversely impacted by both the current economic climate and reductions or caps on social security payments during 2013/14. Whilst difficult to accurately estimate with any great deal of certainty, this could potentially be in the region of 2% to 10%, which equates to a reduction of between £21,000 to £105,000.

5.2.3 The charges for Residential Homes (80 Gascoigne Road & Kallar Lodge) are being held at current 2012/13 rates, with an aim to move to full cost recovery next year.

5.2.4 The in-house Day Care centres (Heathlands and Maples) a differential charging has been introduced to maintain income currently received from other Borough placements and also remain competitive with local providers.

5.2.5 All charges include a factor of 12% to cover corporate overheads.

5.3 Eastbury Manor House (Ref 9 – 83)

5.3.1 Following research with prospective customers, a new 'dry hire' package is being introduced for civil marriage/partnership ceremonies and receptions. This package enables customers to make their own arrangements in relation to bar and catering provision, which is an important consideration in these financially constrained times. The standard 'dry hire' charge will be £265 per hour for a weekend booking.

5.3.2 New functions hire and children's party offers are also being introduced for 2013/14.

5.3.3 The existing room hire pricing structure is being amended for 2013/14. The key changes are the introduction of a block booking discount (25%) and the removal of the whole house hire option. The proposed increases in individual room hire range from 0% to 6% depending on current usage levels and demand.

5.3.4 Benchmarking indicates that admission charges are at the lower end of the market and it is intended to increase these to be more in line with similar National Trust and

English Heritage properties. For Borough residents, admission charges to Eastbury Manor House are to be maintained at the current rate of £3.00 for adults and £1.00 for children but increased to £4.00 and £2.00 respectively for other visitors.

5.4 Valence House (Ref 84 – 132)

- 5.4.1 Room hire charges are to be increased by between 3% and 6% for educational and community use and between 7% and 20% for commercial hires.
- 5.4.2 There is some simplification of charges for archives and local studies reprographics. Some are increased, but many remain unchanged as the charges are already at the high end of the market and generate only a small amount of income.
- 5.4.3 A 30 minute look up and print out charge (including postage) for remote users (£10) is being introduced.

5.5 Heritage Education (Refs 90 and 91)

- 5.5.1 There is no proposed increase in charge for Heritage education activities. A new and competitive charge of £4.50 per child for Borough schools and £5.50 per child from other schools was introduced in 2012-13.

5.6 Libraries (Ref 133 – 183)

- 5.6.1 There is no increase proposed for fines for overdue books. At 30p per day the fine charged by the Council is the highest in its benchmarking group, where the average is 21p.
- 5.6.2 The same is true for black and white photocopying charges with A4 copies at 20p and A3 at 40p, where the average is 14p and 23p respectively. It is proposed to hold these charges at the current rate.
- 5.6.3 It is proposed to increase the cost of replacement library cards by 25p, which would mean that adults will now pay £2.75 and children/over 60s will pay £1.75.
- 5.6.4 A new service will be introduced allowing for printing from laptops and mobile devices using wi-fi. This will be available from Barking library and Dagenham library from 2013/14. This will be priced the same as for printing from library PC's.
- 5.6.5 In 2012/13 the Council introduced a charge for internet access from its library PCs, the first and only local authority in London to do so. There was some initial resistance to this from service users but this was relatively short lived. It is proposed that the charge is maintained for 2013/14 but refined as follows:
 - Free subscription – for all under 20's and over 60's
 - Borough residents (aged 20-59): £6 annual fee – 1 hour computer time per day; £12.00 – 2 hours computer time per day; £25.00 – 3 hours computer time per day.
 - Non- Borough residents (aged 20 – 59): £25 annual fee – 2 hours computer time per day.
 - Charges for usage of computers by non-library card holders aged over 16 (Guest use): £1 for 30 minutes computer time and £2 for 60 minutes.

5.7 Barking Learning Centre and Dagenham Library (Ref 184 – 223)

5.7.1 After measures taken in recent times to bring hire charges in line with comparable facilities, it is proposed to increase room hire charges on the whole by between 3% and 4%.

5.8 Community Halls (Ref 224 – 229)

5.8.1 It is proposed to increase hire charges by 3% for the three community halls still directly managed by the Council.

5.9 Events (Parks and Barking Town Hall square) (Ref 230 – 252)

5.9.1 Charges for commercial hires in the parks, primarily fun fairs, will increase between 5% and 10%. Non commercial hires, such as fun days, will increase between 4% and 10%.

5.9.2 To help encourage greater use of the Town Hall square for events it is proposed to hold the hire charges at the current rate.

5.9.3 With the ending of the Dagenham Town Show and the termination of the Council's events team in 2013/14, discussions will be undertaken with the Housing and Environment department during 2013 to agree how the administration and charging regime for parks events will be managed from 2014/15 onwards.

5.10 Leisure Centres (Ref 253 – 323)

5.10.1 The key principles that inform the fees and charges levied at the leisure centres were agreed by Members as part of the 2012/13 budget round. There is a clear mandate to make the service as cost effective as possible but to try to ensure that charges remain affordable. In terms of pricing policies at the leisure centres, this means:

5.10.2 Discounts to standard prices will be provided to those residents for whom price can be a barrier to participation:

- Children and young people aged 16 and under
- Full time students
- People over the state pension age
- People on low incomes in receipt of means tested benefits
- People receiving 'carer's allowance'
- People on disability related benefits

5.10.3 Service users who aren't Borough residents will be charged more for services, where appropriate.

5.10.4 Pricing changes will be informed by market conditions and, in particular, by benchmarking against London and near neighbour councils. The normal approach will be for standard prices to be pitched at about the London average and/or towards the top end of what is being charged for by local authority provided or commissioned services in neighbouring councils.

- 5.10.5 The LBB staff concession for memberships will be set at 75% of the standard price. For corporate memberships the price will be pitched at the same level as standard charges with discounted prices only becoming available when certain thresholds have been reached in terms of membership take up.
- 5.10.6 In the current year, the leisure centres have an income growth target of £310,000, an increase of 15% on the previous year. To support the achievement of this challenging target, Members agreed some significant price increase for 2012/13. As a result more modest increases are proposed for 2013/14.
- 5.10.7 The key income streams for the leisure centres are Active Fitness memberships, swimming lessons and casual swimming.
- 5.10.8 For 2013/14 the following changes are proposed:
- Increase the standard Active Fitness membership price from £39 to £40 (an increase of 3%);
 - Increase the 10 week block swimming lesson price from £55 for adults to £57 (an increase of 4%) with a corresponding increase in the concessionary price from £41 to £43; and
 - Increase in the casual swimming 'pay and play' price to £3.70 for adults (up by 10p or 3%) and for concessions £2.40 (up by 5p or 2%).
- 5.10.9 To reward the loyalty of children participating in the learn to swim programme and to encourage them to get into a lifelong habit of exercising regularly, they will be allowed to use the swimming pool for free for casual swimming for as long as they are enrolled on the swimming lesson programme.
- 5.10.10 Changes are also proposed for the Jolly Jungle soft play facility to bring them in line with other providers: a 20p increase to under 3s and over 3s, up to £4.20 (5% rise) and £5.20 (4% rise) respectively; as well as a 40p or 3% increase to the monthly membership price from £12.00 to £12.40.

5.11 Barking Splash Park (Ref 373 – 377)

- 5.11.1 A 3% increase is proposed for the Barking Splash Park standard price for children aged over 1: Borough residents up 10p to £3.10 and for other service users up 10p to £3.60.

5.12 Mayesbrook Athletics Arena (Ref 378 – 385)

- 5.12.1 The Arena closed for renovation in 2011 and has not re-opened since it was used as a Games Time Training Venue for the Olympics. The management and operation of the Arena will transfer from Housing and Environment to Culture and Sport for 2013/14 onwards.
- 5.12.2 Benchmarking has been undertaken with ten athletics facilities that are within 12 miles of Mayesbrook Park to inform the development of the proposed fees and charges tariff for the Arena. The prices proposed also reflect the quality of the facilities now provided and the requirement to operate the facility at no worse than a financial break even position.

5.12.3 The key charges proposed are as follows: athletic club hire charge - £45 per hour; school athletics sports day - £40 per hour; other hire - £50 per hour.

5.13 Broadway theatre (Ref 386 – 391)

5.13.1 The Broadway theatre trust, which managed the theatre on behalf of the Council and Barking and Dagenham College, wound up its affairs in July 2012 at which time the operation of the venue reverted back to the Council.

5.13.2 It is expected that the Council will continue to manage the venue during 2013/14 and the key hire charges proposed are as follows:

- Theatre per hour (Monday – Thursday): Commercial - £85, Community - £65
- Theatre per hour (Friday – Sunday): Commercial - £105, Community - £85 (min. 4 hour booking)
- Drama studio/Dance studio per hour: Commercial - £25, Community - £20

5.13.3 Ticket prices for individual shows that are programmed by the Council will be set by officers on a show by show basis based on the nature of the performance programmed as well as its likely appeal and associated costs.

6.0 Children's Services (Ref 392 – 404)

6.1 Early Years Provision (Ref 392 – 394)

6.1.1 The fees and charges have increased partly to meet the corporate 3% global increase required across fees and charges, and further to keep in line with market rates.

6.2 Butler Court (Ref 397 – 404)

6.2.1 Charges for room hire are increasing by 3%, which is in line with inflation and the corporate increase in fees and charges agreed by Cabinet.

7.0 Housing & Environment (Ref 405 – 964)

7.1 Park Sports (Ref 405 – 477)

7.1.1 Pavilions/club houses/changing rooms (Ref 405 – 408) – The intention is to ensure, where possible, we move all of our clubs that are resident in club houses and pavilions into long term arrangements that will be the subject of locally agreed terms and charges. These charges are therefore not included here but will reflect full cost recovery. Unless stated otherwise, fees here reflect pitch fee rental only. Where required, a fee for use of pavilions for changing etc has been set as a fee per use and will be linked to pitch bookings.

7.1.2 The lawn bowls review proposed that each of the clubs is offered a lease for the associated use of the bowls pavilions in 2014-15. Therefore, whilst discussions with the clubs are ongoing, and until the full cost of the pavilions has been established, the proposed increase in 2013-14 is limited to 3% and the current charge of £1,140 will increase to £1,175.

- 7.1.3 Cricket (Ref 416 – 420) – The cost of maintaining each of our two cricket pitches is £9,206 each. It is proposed to limit increases to 3% for 2013/14 and continue an effective subsidy to cricket. Subsidy here is recommended on the basis that there is no real prospect for reducing costs through merger, or allowing clubs to self manage pitches.
- 7.1.4 Football (Ref 421 – 426) – The borough has 54 pitches (37 adult, 6 junior, 6 mini, 5 nine a side). The costs for maintaining each size of pitch varies but the total cost is £69,245. Additional costs relate to the need for attendants to manage goal allocation, unofficial use, conditions of use and cleanliness. These costs inflate the operational costs by a further £51k. The cost of a 30 or 15 match seasonal contract is simply a multiple of the unit pitch hire cost. The proposed charges also remove the 15% discount for full payment before 01 October which has previously been offered to hirers of winter pitches.
- 7.1.5 It is proposed that we limit increases to 3% for 2013/14. Subsidy here is recommended on the basis that the costs of football attendance are a consequence of mobile goals now in place and terms and conditions applied to football pitch hire. The service will be looking to reduce its costs and to better maximise pitches over 2013/14 and will recommend a revised fee structure following consultation.
- 7.1.6 Rugby (Ref 427 – 430) – There are two rugby locations covering union and league codes. Pitches cost £1,203 each to maintain. A single charge of £76.50 is proposed for the hire of a rugby pitch and this represents an increase of 34% on the 2012-13 charge. The proposed charge for a season or up to 30 matches (adult) is £1,203 which will help achieve full cost recovery. The proposed charges also remove the 15% discount for full payment before 01 October which has previously been offered to hirers of winter pitches.
- 7.1.7 Lawn Bowls (Ref 456 – 458) – In accordance the ongoing bowls review the proposed charges for the use for the borough's bowling green facilities reflect the increases necessary to achieve full cost recovery. The clubs will have the option of paying the increased fees and charges so that the Council's costs are covered in full, or alternatively the clubs may decide to take on all responsibilities and liabilities for the bowling greens in exchange for a nominal rent.
- 7.1.8 Tennis (Ref 465 – 466) – The hourly rates for adult and juniors (£5 and £3 per hour respectively) have been set following a benchmarking exercise and are competitive and comparable with the charges levied by neighbouring boroughs for public tennis court hire.
- 7.2 **Allotments (Ref 478)**
- 7.2.3 The borough has 17 statutory allotment sites and these are leased to eight different allotment societies. The current lease arrangements are the subject of an ongoing review. Therefore, only a 5% increase in the charge per acre is proposed. This will see the current charge per acre of £121.28 increase to £127.00.

7.3 Ranger Services (Ref 479 – 504)

- 7.3.1 Barking Park education programme (Ref 479 – 482) – The proposed charges for the education programme have been set following a detailed bench marking exercise. The higher than inflation increases of between 7% and 17% reflect the improved visitor centre facilities and the high quality of the education programme now on offer.
- 7.3.2 Visitor centre accommodation (Ref 483 – 488) - The high quality of the facilities now on offer and following the completion of the park restoration project the associated improvements to the park environment merit a higher than inflation increase (i.e. 4% to 13%) in the visitor centre room hire fees. However, the proposed rates are still competitive when compared to charges made by other providers of similar accommodation elsewhere in the borough and by neighbouring boroughs.

7.4 Parking (Ref 505 – 609)

- 7.4.1 We have carried out a complete review of all parking charges within our control and have benchmarked against 11 other boroughs to compare rates.
- 7.4.2 Operational Permits (Ref 505) – There is a proposed increase of 33% in operational permit charges but there will be a doubling of the period of use from 2 to 4 hours. This is to allow users more flexibility to carry out their duties.
- 7.4.3 Resident / Visitor permits (Ref 506 – 541) – CO₂ Emission based permits have been re-adjusted to decrease the cost of a first vehicle, and larger vehicles. This will reduce income by an estimated £48k. We have also implemented a 4 hour permit scratch card for residents.
- 7.4.4 Health Leisure Centre members (Ref 542) – currently members of the Becontree Heath Leisure Centre (BHLC) pay and display at normal parking rates, although initially these were set very low because of concerns raised that costs would be a deterrent. There are no special charges for Barking Town Centre car parks but the move to 24hr charges at Axe Street has impacted on users that previously benefitted from free evening and night parking. The proposal is to introduce a standard £15 fee that can be paid by leisure centre members for a free parking at BHLC as part of their annual membership payment.
- 7.4.5 CPZ RingGo (Ref 543) – A charge of 50p for one hour is being proposed to provide an option within selected CPZ areas at a later stage in the year.

7.5 Regulatory Services (Ref 610 – 848)

- 7.5.1 Licensing (Ref 610 – 800) – Fees proposed are prescribed by government or set at the maximum levels appropriate. A review of charges has required some adjustment for administrative functions such as photocopying and one adjustment where a fee did not reflect EU Services legislation on what can be recovered through charges.
- 7.5.2 Street Trading and Barking Market (Ref 801 – 825) – Street trading fees were reviewed and benchmarked and are broadly in line with other authorities therefore the proposed increase is in line with RPI at 3%. The revised fees for Barking

Market based on a composite pitch and license fee review. There is a proposed increase in fees for Barking Market of 5% based on prime position. The Council is in consultation with the traders and managing agent, and therefore there may be some adjustments required depending on the outcome of this.

- 7.5.3 Building Control (Ref 826) – There are no proposed fee increases; charges are reviewed three-yearly in accordance with government guidelines and based on chargeable hours.
- 7.5.4 Highways Permits (Ref 827 – 848) – It is proposed to increase charges that apply to commercial operations to bring them in line with other Boroughs and to take into account increased operating costs relating to the issuing and administration of licences. No changes are currently proposed for Footway Crossing fees but a further report will be submitted to members in respect of providing affordable cross-overs.

7.6 Direct Services (Ref 849 – 878)

- 7.6.1 Pest Control (Ref 849 - 878) – Except for bedbugs all fees have reflected full cost recovery at the standard rate and have therefore only been increased by 3%. Bedbug prices have been inflated to reflect full cost recovery, which at the standard rate is an increase of £52.80. A proposed new charge for rat treatment has also been included and this reflects a position taken by other council pest control services.
- 7.6.2 Trade Waste (Ref 879 – 889) – Prices have been increased to reflect an increase in disposal costs plus 3%.
- 7.6.3 Cemeteries (Ref 890 – 923) – Fees have been inflated to reflect benchmarking undertaken with neighbouring London boroughs. This equates to increases of 12-20% for most grave and internment fees. Fees for children and baby burials have not been inflated.

7.7 Housing (Ref 930 – 964)

- 7.7.1 Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Fees (Ref 935 - 940) – Licensing fees are to be charged at application stage and last for 5 years. There is no renewal, when license expires a new application will need to be made (subject to any changes in legislation). Fees have been increased by 5% p.a. for each year since fee was introduced in 2006 to reflect RPI. There will be an annual increase for all new applications in line with RPI.
- 7.7.2 Charging for Notices (Ref 941) – Barking & Dagenham have not charged for Notices since charging was introduced in 2006. Charging for Notices can increase compliance at an informal stage. It is recommended to charge a flat rate for the service of Improvement Notices, Prohibition Orders, Emergency Remedial Action, Emergency Prohibition Orders and Demolition Orders and issue a demand for Improvement Notices in all instances. Fees were recommended in 2006 at £200 per notice (which were the subject of a separate Cabinet report, and are not within the attached Appendix A). This fee has been revised at an annual increase of 5% in line with HMO Licensing fees bringing the fee for 2013/14 to £280.

8.0 Finance & Resources (Ref 964 – 1030)

8.1 Registrars (Ref 965 – 1000)

- 8.1.1 An external review of all fees and charges in this area was undertaken and the main conclusion was that the current fee structure did not enable the service to recover its costs. Fees and charges have been updated to ensure that the Council is operating on a full cost recovery basis for these services. Accordingly, many fees have been increased in excess of 3%. Also a number of charges have been reduced to ensure the service remains priced at a competitive level.
- 8.1.2 New charges have been introduced, which were recommended as a result of the review undertaken, these include: application for place of worship; application for place of marriage; and nationality checking service flat charge per document (per Child). Cancellation and booking fees have been introduced to ensure the service is managed effectively.

8.2 Street Naming and Numbering (Ref 1001 – 1006)

- 8.2.1 The fees and charges for this area were the subject of a detailed review last year and the rates currently in force now correctly reflect the amount of staff time and complexity of the tasks involved. Income levels from this area are largely dependent upon the amount of ongoing housing development within the Borough so the proposed increase for 2013/14 of 3% will not have an effect on the demand for the service.

8.3 Pre-Application Planning Meetings (Ref 1007 – 1014)

- 8.3.1 These meetings have proved helpful to both developers and the Authority as they can assist with more efficient processing of planning applications. The proposed increase in these charges for 2013/14 is in line with inflation and it is not felt that this will have any effect on demand for the service.

8.4 Local Land Charges / National Land Information Service (Ref 1015 – 1029)

- 8.4.1 The Council must set its charges for this area with the intention of breaking even over a rolling three year period. In the light of static employee costs and reducing support charges, plus minimal changes expected in demand to significantly change workloads, it is proposed that there are no price changes in this area.

9.0 Advertising

- 9.1 The Council's advertising is undergoing continual development as it expands its portfolio. Ongoing development of income generation opportunities is one of the ways that officers are exploring how best to achieve more out of existing assets. Advertising continues to grow from print to online and outdoor media assets.
- 9.2 Each advertising format has a standard rate card and media pack. Due to the varying nature of advertising which is based on volume, location, seasonal trends, business type and demand, it will be necessary on occasions to allow for variations to the standard rate. For example, the flexibility to vary the rate would allow officers the power to negotiate the rate with high volume purchases, offer discounts to fill

last-minute empty spaces and support small local businesses to raise their profile within their communities. The power to negotiate and allow variations will aid the Council's efforts to maximise income potential during each season throughout the year.

10.0 Options Appraisal

10.1 Officers have considered a range of options as to changes to existing fees and charges and, where appropriate, used market knowledge and benchmarking to inform the proposals.

11.0 Consultation

11.1 The revised fees and charges have been set using benchmarking information and through discussions with other councils. Where the fees and charges form part of the budget savings process, the Council has conducted a public consultation exercise following the publication of its savings proposals. The public and stakeholders were given opportunities to respond to the consultation through Select Committee meetings, Leader Question Time events, a comments facility on the website, Facebook and Twitter.

12.0 Financial Implications

12.0 The financial implications are considered throughout this report.

13.0 Legal Implications

Completed by Paul Field, Corporate Governance Lawyer

13.1 The Council is required under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to produce a 'balanced budget'. Income generated from fees and charges contributes to the Council's finances. Furthermore, local authorities are under an explicit duty to ensure that their financial management is adequate and effective, and that they have a sound system of internal control and management of financial risk. The annual review of fees and charges contributes to this requirement.

14.0 Other Implications

14.1 **Risk Management** - In proposing these revised fees and charges officers have considered the impact of increases adversely affecting demand for the service and in turn on the achievement of both the community priorities and the Council's budget. The risk of these proposals will be monitored through the Council's various performance indicators, its service scorecards and the budget monitoring process.

14.2 **Customer Impact** - Officers have amended fees and charges in such a way as to try, where possible, to minimise the impact on customers during these difficult times while at the same time enabling the Council to achieve a balanced budget and ensure full cost recovery. In some instances fees and charges have been reduced in order to deliver better value for money for our residents and to encourage increased take up of services.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- 2013/14 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Local Government Act 2003
- Benchmarking Information

List of appendices:

- Appendix A: Schedule of Proposed Fees and Charges
- Appendix B: Schedule of Previous Fees & Charges that are no longer applicable