

AGENDA ITEM 9

POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

25th SEPTEMBER 2012

JOINT REPORT OF HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES AND HEAD OF COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

A CORPORATE REVIEW OF CHARGES 2013-14

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information on the various fees and charges that are made by this committee. Management Team have requested a full review of fees and charges following receipt of a report from Deloitte's in 2011-12, who carried out a review of all East Midlands' Councils fees and charges.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the committee approves the proposed level of charges for 2013-14 for each of the services set out in Appendix A to operate from 1st April 2013.**
- 2.2 **That the committee approves the revised charging policy set out in Appendix B.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

All charges

- 3.1 It was agreed at the meeting of the Budget & Strategic Planning Working Group on 20th June 2011 that in future charges would only be considered by members on an exception basis i.e. only new proposed charges or charges that were proposed to be increased above or below inflation would be considered by members in line with delegated authority set out in the constitution. Similarly statutory charges have not been included for consideration by members.
- 3.2 In 2011-12 Deloitte's carried out a review of all East Midlands Councils fees and charges. There were two separate reviews; one on Building Control fees and charges and the other covering a number of other fees and charges. A report on this review was considered by the Budget and Strategic Planning Working Group on the 19th June 2012. The review benchmarked the Council's fees and charges against other East Midlands Councils, and also where the Council was either not providing a service, or there was no charge for a service. The results of the Deloitte's review were presented to Management Team and have formed a basis for a full review of some existing charges including the proposal of new charges for where currently no charges are made and ultimately for the setting of fees and charges in 2013-14.
- 3.3 Appendix A shows the proposed charges for services that fall outside delegated authority. The table also summarises the financial objective of the current charging policy, the existing charges, the current level of any subsidy and the reason for the recommended charge.
- 3.4 There is a charging policy included in the MTFs; this should be used as a guideline when setting fees and charges. A revised policy including concessions has been approved by Management Team on 20th August 2012 and by the Budget and Strategic Planning Working Group on 13th September 2012.
- 3.5 The revised policy has been attached at Appendix B for member's approval. The policy was devised based on the Deloitte's review, best practice from other Local Authorities, discussions with budget holders and the Equalities Impact Assessment. There have been no fundamental changes that will impact on the fees recommended above.

- 3.6 As part of the review process managers are asked to complete a “review of charges form for 2013-14” for each distinct charging area. The aim of this process is to gather background information to the charges being reviewed. A set of completed forms will be available at the meeting.

Land Charges

- 3.7 The Deloitte’s review identified one charge that was in the lower quartile, additional parcels of land. Benchmarking of comparable authorities charges was undertaken and have been taken into account when setting the recommended charges contained within Appendix A.
- 3.8 Personal searches are provided free of charge as established by case law, customers are entitled to this service under the Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations.

4.0 POLICY & CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The fees and charges set out in this report are the ones that do not meet the charging policy set in line with corporate and service objectives; these vary according to the service provided. More detailed explanations on each service’s corporate implications can be found on the forms available at the meeting.

5.0 FINANCIAL & OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Financial and resource implications have been addressed within paragraph 3. Once approved, these charges will be built into the 2013-14 revenue budget process.
- 5.2 Some services include chargeable and non chargeable elements. In line with the charging policy, the best estimate of under/over recovery of costs is included in Appendix A. Members may wish to review whether it is appropriate for those services receiving a subsidy to continue to do so.
- 5.3 Local Government funding continues to be reviewed and there is great uncertainty surrounding funding in later years although almost certainly will be reduced. This is reflected in the Council’s MTFs and places a greater onus on the Council to seek to maximise its income from other sources.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

- 6.1 Local Authorities have certain limited freedoms to charge for discretionary services under the Local Government Act 2003. Where appropriate any other relevant legislation is noted within the Appendix A to this report.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 There are no direct links to community safety arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

- 8.1 A revised equalities impact assessment (EIA) has been completed for the revised charging policy and is available on request.

9.0 RISKS

- 9.1 A possible risk to the Council is that budgeted revenue income may not be achieved if services are not taken up due to any charges increase. Income budgets are regularly monitored and where a downturn in demand is identified appropriate action is taken.

10.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 There are no climate change issues directly arising from this report.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 Budget Holders carried out the review with the assistance of the Service Accountant as required with reference to current budget monitoring protocols and the Deloitte's review.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All wards are affected.

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Date: 21st August 2012

Appendices: Appendix A - Review of Fees and Charges
Appendix B – Revised Charging Policy

Background Papers: Forms for the Review of Charges
Charging Policy

Reference: X:\Cttee, Council & Sub Cttees\PFA\2012-13\250912\Corporate Review of
Charges 2013-14