

## Fees and Charges 2025-26

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<b>Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>All Portfolio Holders</b>

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Ensuring the right conditions to support delivery (inward)
<b>Relevant Ward Member(s):</b>	N/A
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):</b>	N/A
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Subject to call-in:</b>	Yes

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 To provide information and proposals on the various fees and charges that the Council sets covering General Fund services both general and special expenses and Housing Revenue Account services for the 2025-26 financial year.
- 1.2 This report sets out the context for this year's annual review of fees and charges. A significant focus of the approach to fees and charges is full cost recovery, to ensure that charges remain in line with increases being experienced in the cost of delivering services.
- 1.3 Income from fees and charges form a key income source for the council in delivering its services. This includes discretionary charges set by the Council through an annual review process which forms part of this report.

- 1.4 The fees and charges review undertaken is in line with the Corporate Charging Policy and approach to be taken, proposing as a starting principle that all charges adopt an inflationary increase. This keeps fees and charges aligned with full cost recovery as much as is possible.
- 1.5 In some exceptional cases it is recommended that a different approach is taken and fees and charges either reduce, remain the same or increase at a rate above or below inflation.
- 1.6 To approve changes to these charges to operate from 1st April 2025.

## 2 Recommendations

### That Cabinet:

- 2.1 **Approves the proposed fees and charges for 2025-26 as outlined in the attached appendices A to E.**
- 2.2 **Delegates authority to the Director for Growth and Regeneration (or the Director of Place and Prosperity once commenced) to undertake the necessary legal steps to finalise the introduction of the updated car parking charges to take effect as soon as practically possible.**

## 3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 To agree changes to the Council's fees and charges to operate from 1st April 2025 with the exception of car parking which is to be applied as soon as practically possible once the relevant legal and practical steps have been undertaken.

## 4 Background

- 4.1 The Council is committed to having a sustainable Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) of which income from fees and charges represent an important source of funds to the Council and enable a wide range of services to be delivered. In order to ensure fees and charges are being used effectively, the Council will ensure its overall charging policy links with its corporate aims and objectives.
- 4.2 The setting of fees and charges is incorporated within the MTFS and budget setting process which will also link to cross cutting issues and impacts that will need to be considered in the context of wider policy objectives. The Charging Policy sets out an overall policy framework to support and guide a practical approach to fees and charges that is consistent with Melton's Corporate Strategy.
- 4.3 This policy also provides guidance to managers on how to cost services in order to determine the amount to be charged taking into account concessions, exemptions etc which have been considered as part of the proposed charges outlined in this report.

## 5 Main Considerations

- 5.1 The councils Charging Policy outlines that fees and charges should annually be subject to a detailed review and, should at least, increase in line with the rate of inflation as part of the budget setting process. The rate of inflation will be set by the Section 151 officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Resources which has been set at 5% for 2025-26 to reflect a blend of CPI rates, projected salary increases and other external factors which impact on the cost of delivering council services.
- 5.2 Some fees and charges are set and amended by statute or through contractual arrangements and so do not require Cabinet approval. Examples include the Leisure centre fees which are set within the parameters of the leisure contract and planning application / some licensing fees which are set by government. These fees and charges are not included in this report which focuses on the remaining fees and charges the Council has discretion to amend as appropriate.
- 5.3 With regard to car parking the purpose of this report is to set out the key facts and main considerations. It builds upon “The Melton Mowbray Town Centre Car and Coach Parking Strategy 2015, deliberations and decisions of the Rural, Economic & Environmental Affairs Committee (REEA) November and December 2015, including the concurrent “inflation policy”.
- 5.4 As Cabinet will be aware, the law states that certain functions are discharged by the executive of a local authority and others are discharged by the Council or committees appointed by it. Where a function is not the responsibility of the executive the executive may not set the fees which are charged in relation to that function. In summary, the fees which are excluded relate to regulatory functions such as planning and licensing, many of which are set by statute. Where the fee for a non-executive function is not set by statute then that fee must be set by the Council or committee which discharges that function, or by an officer to whom the power is delegated. Officers are consulting the Chairs of the relevant committees relating to setting those fees and will report to those committees if required
- 5.5 Appendices A to E outline the proposed charges for 2025-26 split by corporate priority and the relevant fund. As outlined previously the general approach to setting of the charges for next year has been to increase them by the 5% inflation level and or cost recovery in line with the corporate charging strategy. There are certain increases or new fees proposed where additional information is provided for members regarding the approach and rationale which is outlined below
- 5.6 **General Fund**
- 5.6.1 **Pre- Planning Advice** - Following benchmarking across other local authorities and taking into account the officer time in dealing with the pre-planning application advice these fees have been increased by 10% which are still comparable with the overall price of submitting an application.
- 5.6.2 **Bulky Waste Collection** – along with the inflationary increase, an additional amount has been added to the fee for collecting single items (£3) and 2-5 items (£5) to reflect an increase in the contract costs. This is due to a change in legislation whereby after collecting certain items such as domestic upholstered seating these can no longer be taken to the previously agreed disposal location and therefore must now be taken straight to a specialist disposal site. This change in disposal location is increasing the cost of

dealing with bulky waste items. Due to the large increase in the actual contractor costs associated with bulky waste collections, the fixed amount increase will be applied for the next 3 years as a staggered approach to manage the increase and impact on residents. The fixed increase in fees for collecting single items (£3) and 2-5 items (£5) will be reviewed annually during the 3 year period to ensure that the figure remains in line with inflation and remains on track to achieve cost neutrality in delivering the service by 2027/28.

### 5.6.3 **Environmental Health** – there a number of amendments to note

- a) The fees for Houses in Multiple Occupation have been updated and broken down into number of occupants to reflect the size and complexity of the different properties, alongside the introduction a new charge for pre application advice to landlords and a late payment charge.
- b) The charge for the provision of factual statements and statements of fact have been updated as have export certificate for cost recovery.
- c) The food hygiene rerating charge has been increased slightly more than inflation as the previous fee was not covering officer time to travel to carry out the full inspection and report required to allow the rerating.
- d) The food surrender certificate charge has been updated to include waste disposal costs if applicable as these have the potential to be very costly if the food requires specialist disposal and waste transfer.

5.6.4 **Community Safety** – The majority of fees remain unchanged as these currently cover costs and are aimed at providing a deterrent however, there has been an increase in one charge for fly posting which has changed from a range of £50 - £100 to £400 - £500. This follows from some updated guidance and legislation from DEFRA as they would like to see local authorities utilising these new amounts as deterrents to reduce incidents across the country.

5.6.5 **Sports** – the £5 per session charge was last increased in 2023-24 and it has been proposed that no further increase be added for 2025-26 . The programmes we deliver are set through Public Health & ICB funding. The cost and specification is consistent across Districts to ensure residents across Leicestershire get the same value for money at programmes delivered by Districts. Whilst no increase in proposed for 2025-26, Officers will look to open up discussions to see if this can be more flexible if agreed by all Districts.

## 5.7 **Car Parking**

5.7.1 Council’s parking policy and decisions around “designation” and the tariff regime must be in accordance with Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (see below) as advised by the Council’s current and former Monitoring Officers.

5.7.2 The Council owns and maintains a small number of off-street carparks, for example in Asfordby and Melton Country Park for which no parking charges are made. Cabinet has indicated that this will not be changed.

5.7.3 Cabinet has indicated that it will not consider proposals to introduce charging on Sundays nor on parking bays reserved for “disabled badge” holders.

5.7.4 The four “Christmas shopping” day concessions will continue except that, in response to representations this will be altered from 4 consecutive Fridays to 2 consecutive Fridays and Saturdays on the lead up to Christmas in December.

- 5.7.5 At the time of preparing this report an additional concession has been offered to the Melton Business Improvement District (the BID), whereby for a trial period the BID will administer 20 concessionary parking passes to support town centre businesses who may be struggling to recruit staff due to parking costs. The passes will be restricted to the Scafford Road car park. The BID has not yet agreed to this arrangement.
- 5.7.6 The car park at the cattle market site E has been administered by Gilstream (the main cattle market operator), initially under licence, now formally lapsed but continued on an informal basis of pending commencement of the “LUF funded Stockyard Development”. This car park is outside the scope of the proposals in this report.
- 5.7.7 The current charges were agreed in January 2020 and implemented April 2020. Between then and now the general rate of inflation (RPI) and forecast to April 2025 is 35%. The table below shows the Council’s “Parking Account outturn for the financial years 20/21 to that forecast for 24/25 and estimated for 25/26 based on the proposals at paragraph 5.7.9 below:

	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024/25</u> FORECAST	<u>2025-26</u> DRAFT BUDGET
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Off Street Income</u>						
Off Street PCN Income	20,828	33,155	27,138	38,170	24,000	24,000
Off Street Parking Fees (including season tickets)	263,448	531,873	606,225	623,170	664,800	770,720
Total Off Street Parking Income	284,276	565,028	633,363	661,340	688,800	794,720
<u>Off Street Expenditure</u>						
Premises Related Costs	100,241	111,793	110,715	95,091	109,805	112,490
Transport Related Costs	3,970	3,970	3,970	3,970	3,970	3,970
Supplies Related Costs	19,886	24,541	19,225	24,186	25,153	26,600
Third Party Payments	66,698	72,932	82,734	109,001	123,580	122,500
Support Costs	157,220	157,820	187,280	199,890	210,170	315,400
Capital Financing Costs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Off Street Parking Expenditure	348,015	371,056	403,924	432,138	472,678	580,960
Net Surplus - available for car park repairs and other eligible traffic management expenditure	<b>-63,739</b>	<b>193,972</b>	<b>229,439</b>	<b>229,202</b>	<b>216,122</b>	<b>213,760</b>

5.7.8 Cabinet has considered the following proposition which seeks to respond both to the inflationary pressures over the last four years and the desire to continue supporting the town centre, whilst also ensuring compliance with the Council’s legal obligations:

- A general below inflation increase of 20%.
- Except that the weekly charge at long stay car parks is capped at £17.
- The number of “free” parking bays in the St Mary Street car park be increased from 7 to 9 and the length of permitted stay is increased from 20 minutes to 30 minutes.

- The Tables below shows the current and proposed new charges for both Short and Long stay car parks:

<b>SHORT STAY</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Up to 1hr	£1.20	£1.40
Up to 2hr	£2.30	£2.80
Up to 3hr	£3.40	£4.10
Up to 4hr	£4.00	£4.80

<b>LONG STAY</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Up to 3hrs	£2.50	£3.00
All Day	£4.50	£5.40
Weekly Ticket	£16.00	£17.00

<b>SEASON TICKETS*</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Monthly Ticket	£50.00	£60.00
6 monthly Ticket	£250.00	£300.00
Annual Ticket	£450.00	£540.00

\*season tickets can only be used in long stay car parks

5.7.9 In order to implement new car parking charges there are a number of actions which need to be undertaken before they can come into force, so it is therefore proposed as part of the recommendations delegated authority is provided to the Director for Growth and Regeneration to implement these as soon as practically possible. In terms of next steps to implement the proposed charges above these are:

- Fabricate and install new signage across all car parks to include new charges
- Reline bays in St Marys Car Park to enable additional 2 bays
- Update ticket machines with new charging schedule
- Update parking app with new fees

## 5.8 **HRA**

5.8.1 A number of the charges have been increased by the required 5% inflationary amount, however in line with the charging policy where costs can be fully ascertained for the latest full financial year then that increase (or decrease) has been applied. There are large increases to some of the accommodation and heating costs at some of our schemes due to the increases in energy costs in 2023-24 compared to those for previous years, this is especially relevant for Bradgate Flats and Bradgate Lane bungalows, Asfordby where the increased gas charges are being smoothed over 2 years in an attempt to reduce the single year burden to tenants.

5.8.2 The reduction in the well-being charge is based on the budgeted spending in 2025-26 taking into account the 2023-24 actual spend, and will continue to be assessed separately annually using the most recent data available.

## 5.9 **Special**

5.9.1 **Allotments** – the last fee increase was in 2023-24 and it has been proposed that no further increase be added for 2025-26. Due to the potential investment required to operate the allotment sites maintaining a 0% increase isn't sustainable in the long term and therefore it is envisaged there will need to be an increase in 2026-27.

5.9.2 **Cemetery** – there was a 25% increase in cemetery fees in 2024-25 to address the significant increase in running costs alongside a reduction in income generally. As the site continues to struggle with capacity issues alongside an increased preference for cremations, income continues to decline. With a limited number of plots available and taking into account the large increase in fees last year a 5% inflationary is proposed for 2025-26. This is unlikely to cover costs long term but it is felt another significant increase isn't appropriate at this current time.

## 6 **Options Considered**

6.1 Not to increase charges but as this isn't in line with the Corporate Charging policy which sets out the principles of applying inflationary increases and ensuring cost recovery, this option wasn't considered.

6.2 In respect of car parking, since the last increase RPI is forecast to have risen by 35% come April 2025 so consideration was given to increasing fees in line with this but members were minded to mitigate the impact as much as possible whilst balancing the impact of rising costs to maintain and service car parking and highways infrastructure.

## 7 **Consultation**

7.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the relevant portfolio holders for proposed charges associated with the services within their remit.

## 8 **Next Steps – Implementation and Communication**

8.1 Communicate to residents and public where required regarding the new charges applicable from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 and update any associated systems, website etc accordingly.

8.2 In terms of car parks as outlined in para 5.7.9 there are a number of actions which need to be undertaken before they can come into force, so it is therefore proposed as part of the recommendations delegated authority is provided to the Director for Growth and Regeneration to implement these as practically as possible

## 9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 Full cost recovery for chargeable services is a key element of the Council's Fees and Charges Policy. This ensures that any increases in the cost of delivering chargeable services are reflected in the setting of fees and charges to avoid additional cost pressures on the council. Such pressures would be in addition to the pressures already being faced by the council in relation to reduced demand for some of its chargeable services which we have seen over the past few years.

Financial Implications reviewed by: **Director for Corporate Services**

## 10 Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 The Corporate Charging Policy contains an outline of the legal powers which apply to fees and charges set by the Council.
- 10.2 Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 (the 2003 Act) provides a general power to charge for discretionary services. To be able to make use of the power to charge for a discretionary service, authorities must have an existing power to provide that service and the person to whom the service is provided must agree both to the service being provided and the charge for that service. The power does not apply in relation to services for which the Council is expressly prohibited from charging. The charges must not exceed the cost of providing those services, calculated on a year-on-year basis. Cabinet must therefore be satisfied that the sums proposed in Appendices A to E (other than those relating to parking – see further below) only represent the costs of providing the service concerned.
- 10.3 Under the Local Authority (Goods and Services) Act 1970, Local authorities are enabled to trade with other local authorities and designated public bodies for the supply of goods or materials; provision of any administrative, professional or technical services; use of any vehicle plant or apparatus including appropriate staff; works of maintenance in connection with land or buildings. Under this act, authorities can make a profit on services, if sold to another local authority, but are not allowed to trade with private sector or individual customers for profit.
- 10.4 Charges for off-street parking are separately regulated by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Section 122 of the 1984 Act states that the powers in the Act may only be exercised for the specific purposes known as the 'traffic management purposes'. These are:
- 10.4.1 to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians),
- 10.4.2 and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway.
- 10.5 When determining how those purpose are met local authorities may take account of:
- 10.5.1 the desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises;
- 10.5.2 the effect on the amenities of any locality affected and (without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph) the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the roads run;



- 10.5.3 the strategy prepared under section 80 of the Environment Act 1995 (national air quality strategy);
- 10.5.4 the importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles; and
- 10.5.5 any other matters appearing to the strategic highways company or the local authority to be relevant.
- 10.6 This means that any income generated by car parks which exceeds the cost of providing those car parks may only be used for the purposes which achieve the objectives set out in paragraphs 10.4. Cabinet must therefore have regard to the current cost of providing car parks when deciding whether, and if so, by how much to increase the sums charged for use of parking spaces and how, should a surplus arise, the purposes for which that surplus may be used.
- 10.7 If the charges are to be increased the Council may not implement these until it has gone through the formal notification process in the 1984 Act.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer.**

## **11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

- 11.1 As no significant changes have been made to any of the charges other than a review of the relevant rate it has not been considered necessary to undertake an equality impact assessment.

## **12 Data Protection Implications (Mandatory)**

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has not been completed as there are no risks/issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons arising directly from this report.

## **13 Community Safety Implications**

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

## **14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications**

No implications have been identified

## **15 Other Implications (where significant)**

- 15.1 No other implications have been identified.

## **16 Risk & Mitigation**

- 16.1 These are assessed as part of the Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Assumptions around demand and usage resulting in fees and charges not being achieved.	High	Critical	High Risk

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High			1	
	4 Significant				
	3 Low				
	2 Very Low				
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	Robust budget monitoring processes in place which are risk assessed to enable potential overspends to be highlighted at an early stage so corrective action can be taken to curtail expenditure elsewhere to offset such losses and shortfalls. The Council does hold unearmarked reserves and some specific reserves that could be used for some areas of pressure, albeit these are reducing and are extremely limited, and should be taken in the context of the future significant cuts that are set to continue and the recent draw on these.

## 17 Background Papers

17.1 None

## 18 Appendices

18.1 Appendix A – Place Priority General Fund proposed charges for 2025-26

18.2 Appendix B – Place Priority General Fund proposed charges for 2025-26

- 18.3 Appendix C – Great Council Priority General Fund proposed charges for 2025-26
- 18.4 Appendix D – Housing Revenue Account proposed charges for 2025-26
- 18.5 Appendix E – Special Expenses proposed charges for 2025-26