

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO CABINET

07 January 2025

Report Title: **Scale of Fees and Charges 2025/26**

Submitted by: **Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)**

Portfolios: **Finance, Town Centres and Growth**

Ward(s) affected: **All**

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
To obtain approval for the proposed scale of fees and charges to apply from 1 April 2025.			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
That Cabinet:			
1. Approve the fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 April 2025, as set out in Appendix 1.			
<u>Reasons</u>			
It is necessary to review the fees and charges which the Council makes in order to keep them in line with the cost of service provision, ensure compliance with the Charging Policy and to establish the amounts to be included in the 2025/26 budget.			

1. Background

- 1.1** The Cabinet is asked annually to consider proposals for the fees and charges to be applied during the following financial year. It is proposed that the new fees and charges set out at Appendix 1 should take effect from 1 April 2025 and remain in force until 31 March 2026.
- 1.2** The Council has an approved Charging Policy, which is followed when fees and charges are proposed and agreed. This sets out the criteria that should be taken into consideration when establishing the amounts to be charged.

2. Issues

- 2.1** The Medium Term Financial Strategy, reviewed by Cabinet on 3 December 2024, assumes an overall 4% increase in the amount of income raised from fees and charges in 2025/26.

- 2.2** The proposals made vary between minimal decreases, increase, and freezes to the fees and charges for the year. When these proposals are applied to the appropriate income budgets, they fall broadly in line with the assumed overall 4% increase.
- 2.3** Most of the fees and charges are inclusive of VAT but in some cases no VAT is chargeable, or VAT is added to the fee or charge. The VAT status of individual fees and charges is shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.4** When considering the level of fees and charges the principles contained in the Charging Policy should be followed. In drawing up the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 these have been considered by Service Directors who were provided with a copy of the Charging Policy and were requested to ensure that their charges were set in accordance with the Policy, considering:
- The cost of providing the service;
 - How much income it is desired to generate and why;
 - Comparison of charges made by other Councils or providers of similar services;
 - Whose use of services it is desired to subsidise and by how much;
 - Whose behaviour it is desired to influence and in what ways;
 - How will charges help to improve value for money, equity and access to services;
 - Will the cost of collecting the income outweigh the income likely to be collected; and
 - Any other relevant factors.
- 2.5** It is acceptable for charges to be set at a level where costs are not fully recovered. There may be reasons for doing so, such as a desire to encourage take up of a service by specified groups, for example the unemployed, benefits recipients, the elderly, disabled persons or children, or to influence particular forms or patterns of behaviour.
- 2.6** The decision to charge less than cost ought to be a conscious one, taken by members and justified by reference to the reasons for setting charges at less than cost as set out in the charging principles contained in the Charging Policy.
- 2.7** For 2025/26 a number of fees compared to previous years have remained frozen due to the ongoing current cost of living challenges and the negative impact this may have on service uptake. This has been factored into the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions.
- 2.8** Alongside the review of the Council's fees and charges, work is continually undertaken to benchmark fees alongside those of other Authorities nationwide. This work is then used as a basis to challenge officers' first fee proposals.
- 2.9** The Scale of Fees and Charges (Appendix 1) shows the current and proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 and indicates those which have been frozen at current levels. There are several new charges proposed for 2025/26. The table below shows these:

2.10 Several fees and charges approved for 2024/25 have been deleted from the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 relating to services no longer provided or superseded. The table below shows these:

Deleted Charges - Description of Charge	Fee / Charge 2024/25 (£)
BULKY RECYCLING	
Reusable items	Free
CEMETERIES	
Use of Chapel & Community Room Newcastle cemetery chapel	200.00
Keele community room - full day hire	150.00
Keele community room - half day hire	75.00
Keele family room - per hour family history research 3hrs (9.00am to 12.00pm)	25.00
CREMATORIUM	
Cremation Fees	
Cremation environmental charge	85.00
Plaques	
12" x 4" new plaque & 10-year hire	520.00
12"x4" Each succeeding 5-year hire	210.00
12" x 8" new plaque & 10-year hire	780.00
12"x8" Each succeeding 5-year hire	380.00
Additional Memorials	
Memorial leaf on tree renewal for 5-years	250.00
Planters	870.00
Each succeeding 5-year hire	355.00
Trees	745.00
Each succeeding 10-year hire	390.00
Donations Memorial Fish/Bulbs	200.00
LEISURE CHARGES	
Jubilee 2	
DJD Junior Dance - Daniel Jones Dance Junior Membership	20.00
DJ Dance Membership existing customers only	28.00
Legacy Off Peak Memberships annual % increase (rounded to nearest 10p)	8%
1:1 dance lesson with DJD Dance - 30 minutes	24.00
1:1 swim / dance lesson with DJD Dance - 30 minutes, block of four lessons	84.00
DJ Wedding Package	210.00

2.11 Due to the commercial sensitivity of the proposed charges for the trade waste service, these are not included on part 1 of the agenda and are exempt from publication by reasons of paragraph 3 of part 1 of schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972. The proposed charges can be found in part 2 of the agenda.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 April 2025, as set out in Appendix 1.

4. Reasons

- 4.1 Applying selective increases to fees and charges enables economic activity to be promoted within the Borough. It also contributes to the delivery of a sustainable budget for 2025/26 and later years and ensures compliance with the Charging Policy.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 The decision to charge less than cost recovery ought to be a conscious one, taken by members and justified by reference to the reasons for setting charges at less than cost as set out in the charging principles contained in the Charging Policy.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 Statutory charges are included in the scale of fees and charges and are noted as such. These are set by the government rather than by the Council. Land Charges and Licensing fees are set in accordance with a statutory requirement to balance income with expenditure. All other charges may be set by the Council in accordance with its Charging Policy

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 Local authorities have a responsibility to meet the Public Sector Duty of the Equality Act 2010. The Act gives people the right not to be treated less favourably due to protected characteristics. It is important to consider the potential impact on such groups and individuals when designing fees and charges.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 The approved levels of fees and charges will be incorporated in the General Fund Budget for 2025/26. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) assumes increased income of £408,000 from an average increase of 4% across the existing range of fees and charges and the introduction of a number of new fees and charges.
- 8.2 The proposals made vary between minimal decreases to increases. When these proposals are applied to the appropriate income budgets, they fall broadly in line with the assumed overall 4% increase.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 A major risk is that a depressed economic situation leads to less demand from users of Council services, resulting in significant loss of income. The level of charges will in some cases influence this demand.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 In shaping detailed fees and charges proposals consideration will be given to:



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

One Digital Council

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Green Council

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 Approval of the fees and charges is a key decision.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

13.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2029/30 (Cabinet 10 September 2024).

13.2 Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26 – First Draft Savings Plans (Cabinet 3 December 2024).

14. List of Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 – Proposed charges from 1 April 2025

14.2 Appendix 2 – Charging Policy

14.3 Appendix 3 – Trade waste charges from 1 April 2025 – commercially sensitive

APPENDIX 1 - SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

ALLOTMENTS	1
BULKY RECYCLING	1
BUS DEPARTURE CHARGES	1
CAR PARKS	1
CEMETERIES	6
CIRCUSES & FAIRS	8
COVENANT CONSENTS	8
CREMATORIUM	9
DOG WARDEN SERVICE	11
ELECTIONS	11
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH	13
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT	16
GARDEN WASTE RECYCLING	16
LAND CHARGES	16
LEISURE CHARGES	17
LICENCES	20
MARKETS	25
MOT	25
MUSEUM & ART GALLERY	26
NAMING/ NUMBERING OF STREETS/ PROPERTIES	27
PEST CONTROL	27
PLANNING SERVICES	28
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING	30
REMOVAL OF DOMESTIC ANIMAL CARCASSES	30
SALE OF SANDBAGS	30
STREET TRADING	31
TOWN CENTRE DISPLAYS	31
TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS	31
WASTE & RECYCLING BINS/ RECEPTACLES	31