

## **CONCESSIONS POLICY – DISCUSSION PAPER**

This paper is written to stimulate debate on whether Cherwell District Council should adopt a Concessions Policy. To that end, it does not recommend a specific way ahead.

### **History**

The Head of Finance advised the Resources & Performance Board, at their committee meeting on 30 November, 2010, that the Council did not have a consistent concessions policy, and members subsequently agreed to work with Finance Officers to develop one.

### **Background**

The Council has discretion to set fees for only a few services provided to individuals:

- Pest control; pre-application planning advice; bulk waste services, septic tank emptying; animal licencing; rodent control; et al.
  - Bulky waste concession removed 30 Nov 10
  - Concession for wasp control services removed 30 Nov 10
  - Concession for rats & mice control services maintained 30 Nov 10

Car parking and museum entry fees have to date been considered exempt from any concessionary policy

### **Warning**

A concession should not be confused with discounts available as routine marketing initiatives by services contracted out through alternative providers such as leisure centres.

- As an example, the Council offers the Cherwell Link Card Scheme to disadvantaged individuals which, for an administrative fee of £5, gives half-price admission for 12 months to all municipal pools and gyms in the area; ten-pin bowling in Bicester and a 50% discount on young person's holiday road shows. Recipients include those entitled to Disability Living, Attendance, Industrial Disablement allowances, incapacity benefit and blue badge parking permit holders.

### **Reasons for adopting having a Concessions Policy**

- To recognise that there are specific groups of people who, through personal circumstance, cannot afford, or need an incentive to use a specific service provided by the Council.
- Transparency

### **Reasons for not adopting a Concessions Policy**

- The state benefit system takes account of and ameliorates the effect of personal disability and/or financial difficulty

## Appendix 1

- Discounted charges are already available for children, students and OAPs through normal marketing initiatives (Link Card Scheme previously mentioned)
- No obvious indicator of who is entitled to a concession at point of payment
- There are so few significant personal services run by the Council to which a concession would be appropriate (rat & mice control only?)
- Additional administration

### **Task**

Members will wish to discuss the merits of adopting a concessions policy. Options might include:

- Agree that this Council does not need a concessions policy as discount schemes already target disadvantaged individuals sufficiently well;
- Agree that the Council adopt the framework concessions policy attached.