

This report is public.	
Fees & Charges Benchmarking 2024/25	
Committee	Budget Planning Committee
Date of Committee	29 October 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Cllr McLean, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	21 October 2024
Report of	Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), Michael Furness

Purpose of report

This report is to provide information to the Committee on proposed Fees and Charges as compared to some other districts to feed back to the Executive as part of the 2025/26 Budget and Business Planning Process.

1.0 Recommendations

The Budget Planning Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note the variances between the council's fees and charges and those of other Oxfordshire districts.
- 1.2 To recommend to Executive any that should be considered for an increase of more than the 2% minimum already assumed in the council's planning assumptions.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Fees and Charges schedule is approved annually as part of the budget process. The council will look to increase its fees and charges in line with its planning assumptions where it has the ability to set the fee level (e.g. some fees are set nationally). Fees and charges are reviewed annually to ensure that they are reasonable and can deviate from the council's planning assumptions where appropriate.
- 2.2 The planning assumption for fees and charges in 2025/26 is an increase of at least 2% which is in line with the current levels of inflation (with the exception of car parking fees which are assumed to increase by 10p per hour). The level of increase in 2024/25 was 10% to reflect the higher levels of inflation at the time of review in 2023 (excluding car parking fees as above).

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	<p>There are no financial implications as a result of this report.</p> <p>Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance, 01 October 2024</p>
Legal	<p>The Council legally has to set a balanced budget each year. Ensuring there is a robust process in place will help it to achieve that.</p> <p>Local authorities have a variety of powers to charge for specific statutory services as set out in Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003. The 2003 Act also provides a power to trade and a power to charge for discretionary services, the latter on a cost recovery basis. The power to charge for discretionary services is not available to local authorities if there is a statutory duty to provide the service or if there is a specific power to charge for it or if there is a prohibition on charging.</p> <p>The Localism Act 2011 also provides local authorities with a general power of competence that confers on them the power to charge for services unless there is a statutory duty to provide the service or if there is a specific power to charge for it or if there is a prohibition on charging.</p> <p>Where authorities have a duty to provide a statutory service free of charge to a certain standard, no charge can be made for delivery to that standard, however delivery beyond that point may constitute a discretionary service for which a charge could be made.</p> <p>All items/services listed in the Appendix 1 are pursuant to a power to provide the relevant service whether it is provided because of a statutory obligation to do so, or on a discretionary basis where the authority is not obliged to provide the service but can choose to do so. In relation to the latter, an authority charging for such services would do so on a cost recovery basis, pursuant to the Local Government Act 2003/Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, 21 October 2024</p>
Risk Management	<p>The Council faces significant risks given the scale of the financial challenge for 2025/26. Having a robust process in place to develop budget proposals and the associated Corporate Plan will help to mitigate these. These risks are managed as part of the operational and leadership risk register.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 3 October 2024</p>

Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		There are no Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications arising as a direct consequence of this report. However, as per our equalities framework, all proposals are developed in line with the Equality Act 2010. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 3 October 2024
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		
Council Priorities	All			
Consultation & Engagement	n/a			

Supporting Information

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 Appendix 1 lists all the fees and charges uplifted by a minimum of 2%, where possible, from the 2024/25 levels. Appendix 2 provides benchmarking against other Oxfordshire councils of the fees and charges which provide the council the most significant income. Appendix 2 also provides the council's annual budgeted income from each fee or group of fees for context. This will give some indication as to the financial impact of any extra increase recommended.

- 3.2 The average fee charged has been provided in Appendix 2 and those of Cherwell's which are lower than average have been highlighted. There are 19 charges across several services where Cherwell's charge is lower than the average charged by the other districts. Other districts also employ different scale fees for their charges than Cherwell. If Cherwell were to raise the fees which are currently below average to the average fee, an additional £0.5m could be generated (assuming no changes in demand).
- 3.3 The highest fees in a range of fees which can be directly compared has also been highlighted and reveals that Cherwell charges the most for 12. Oxford City has the most fees at the highest point at 17. If Cherwell were to match the highest fees, an additional £1.6m could be generated (assuming no changes in demand).

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Budget Planning Committee are invited to note and comment on the contents of Appendices 1 and 2 and recommend to Executive any that should be considered for an increase in excess of the planning assumption.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 None required.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 No alternative options have been considered.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	DRAFT 2025/26 Fees and Charges Schedule

Appendix 2	2024/25 Fees and Charges Benchmarking
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
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