

## REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2025-26

Meeting: **Executive**

Date Of Meeting: **13 February 2025**

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Date Published: **5 February 2025**

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 It is the Council's policy to review its discretionary fees and charges at least once a financial year. Each review includes the approach, principles, risks and issues with implementing the new charges. In general, increases are proposed to help services move towards becoming at least cost-neutral where possible and to mitigate the Council's projected budget gap.

### 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive is requested to:

#### RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL THAT

- i. **the proposed guiding principles in relation to setting fees and charges, set out in section 4 of the report, be approved; and**
- ii. **the discretionary fees and charges for 2025/26, as set out in Appendices 1-3 of the report, be approved.**

#### Reason for Decision

2.2 The review of discretionary charges ensures that the Council maintains its income base and generates additional resources for the provision of services.

### 3.0 Background

3.1 In accordance with Council policy, fees and charges which are at the discretion of the Council are reviewed at least annually.

3.2 To address the Council's budget gap, the strategic approach to the current Medium Term Financial Strategy has incorporated a commitment to become a smaller council (closer to the average of authorities with similar demographics) whose focus should be on providing statutory services, with discretionary services to be fully funded. This

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is underpinned by a set of Guiding Principles, as reported to July's Executive, to establish good practice in budget setting.

- 3.3 The fees and charges for 2024/25 were approved by the Council on 16 November 2023 and the forecast income was incorporated in the 2024/25 budget approved by the Council in March 2024. It is important to note that not all fees and charges were revised at that time, as that work took place at the same time as wider restructuring of services. Certain areas were deferred to allow for further detailed work and benchmarking. Where fees have been held for two or more years, this is highlighted in this report.
- 3.4 Service areas have been asked to look at ways of optimising income through increased activity, revised charging, or new charging opportunities. Full details of the relevant services and the proposals for the fees and charges are set out in sections 5, 6 and 7 and Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of this report.
- 3.5 The fees and charges review has also been informed by detailed work undertaken across the Council to understand the true cost of services (i.e. ensure internal support service costs and overheads are apportioned appropriately for each service). This is the 'hidden subsidy' workstream that forms part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. By way of background, the legacy overhead recharge mechanism was previously based on a system where support service costs were held centrally and not allocated to services. As part of the "Hidden subsidy" transformational workstream, the review of the recharge mechanism was designed to be consistent with accounting standards, in particular guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The review was designed to appropriately allocate costs across service areas, which is a key element of the Finance Recovery workstream that forms part of the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan. This work has been key to our consideration of appropriate fees and charges, and what changes are needed to for discretionary services to become cost-neutral, in line with the principles outlined below.
- 3.6 In addition, and where appropriate, benchmarking has been undertaken either in terms of nearest neighbouring authorities (namely other Surrey districts and boroughs) or in relation to Statistical Neighbours (those authorities with similar characteristics, but not necessarily in the same geographical area). The approach taken for each service area and the reasons for that approach are set out within the individual proposals in the report.
- 3.7 As part of the review of fees and charges, the developments made in year to improve financial monitoring information, has enabled a more comprehensive review of income recovery performance against budget and forecasted activity levels. This fees and charges report incorporates both the impact of increases in fees and the review of activity levels.
- 3.8 The impact of the proposed discretionary fees and charges changes is initially estimated to result in net additional income of circa £357,000 for 2025/26 (please see section 8 of this report) and will also provide the platform to generate additional income in future years, helping services move to becoming cost neutral.
- 3.9 Alongside the fees and charges review, income budgets have also been reviewed to ensure current targets are achievable in the current economic environment. For a

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number of services, current income targets are based on pre-pandemic activity levels and, while activity has partially recovered since the pandemic, the income targets are not fully being achieved. As such, these income budgets have been rebased, as set-out in section 8. Officers will monitor the impact of the changes into the new year and report on delivery through the Council's agreed budget monitoring framework.

3.10 The changes to discretionary fees and charges recommended in this report supports the delivery of related savings proposals agreed at Executive on in December 2024 as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Update report.

### 4.0 Setting Discretionary Fees and Charges Guiding Principles

4.1 In reviewing and setting fees and charges, it is important that both the process and the fees themselves are transparent, fair, equitable, affordable and socially responsible. Principles underpinning the setting of discretionary fees and charges have previously been agreed to guide the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) process in 2023 and these are set out below.

1	Fees and charges will be reviewed annually and adjusted for inflation, comparability and competitiveness.
2	As a socially responsible Council, the impact on vulnerable groups will be considered carefully.
3	Service level spend will be benchmarked regularly with a suitable peer group and proposals to align with the benchmark will be brought forward.
4	Given the financial position of the Council and the need to maintain key statutory services, the Council will seek to optimise receipts from all funding streams and income over the period of the MTFS.

4.2 For 2025/26, the following additional guiding principles have also informed the process.

1	When legislation and market conditions allow, charges should be set at a rate that enables the Council to at least recover costs in full.
2	The recovery of full cost via charges will be based on the options and policy implications. Significant policy changes would be for the 2026/27 budget to allow time for member and stakeholder consultation. Meanwhile the Council will consider what a reasonable level of increase will be for 2025/26 to enable time to consider the implications and alternative options for those services.
3	Costs should include full recovery of overheads that are allocated to the chargeable services through the Council's recharge mechanism.
4	In calculating the fees and charges, depreciation and other adjustments as required by the relevant local authority guidance will be included.
5	The Council will differentiate between charges for discretionary services (for example: parking) and those that are set by a legislative framework (for example: planning and environmental services).
6	Income from fees and charges forms part of the budget for the services it relates to and budgeted for accordingly. When considering fees and charges increases the potential impact on demand for the service should be considered

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- 4.3 These principles are intended to be complementary and supplement guidance relating to the Council's existing commercial protocols.
- 4.4 Across services a range of increases are being proposed, due to the need to take into account the agreed charging principles, any statutory requirements, benchmarking and the date the charges were last increased.
- 4.5 An overarching Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed in relation to the proposals set out in this report, in line with the overarching principle 2 above, and is attached as Appendix 4.

### 5.0 Communities Directorate

- 5.1 The Communities Directorate sets discretionary fees and charges for community centres/pavilions with outdoor sports pitches, the Careline service, Hale End Court extra care, Home link, Handyperson services, Independent Living Pop-In Service, Community Meals services, cafe provision at Hale End Court and Leisure Centres. Full details are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

#### **Community Centres/Pavilions with Outdoor Sports Pitches**

- 5.2 Due to the serious financial situation faced by the Council, a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy was adopted at Full Council in February 2024. The aim is to transfer the day-to-day running and maintenance of community facilities to local community-based organisations. The community organisations will operate the asset as a way of continuing it without funding from the Council due to budget pressures on discretionary services.
- 5.3 For any Community Centres that the Council continues to operate from April 2025, including those centres where a transfer has not yet concluded, it is proposed that fees increase by 10%. This approach will allow the Council to charge a reasonable hire for each facility and work towards cost recovery for each asset whilst the CAT process concludes. Increasing hiring income will also get any future community asset transfers off to the best possible start. It is important to note that Community Centre charges have not had any major rises in fees since 2015.
- 5.4 For those centres which have been transferred through the CAT process, the Council will relinquish control of setting fees and charges.
- 5.5 As with the Community Centres, it may be that some or all pavilions have not transferred to community organisations by 30 November 2025 (when the existing leisure contract ends) as part of the CAT process. A 10% charge increase is therefore also recommended for all pavilions and outdoor sports pitches. It should be noted that this charge increase would not actually come into effect for most users until the new season commences in September 2025, with cricket pitch users impacted the earliest in May 2025. Again, this will help the Council move more towards a cost neutral position for each of these assets as the CAT process concludes. Once pavilions have been transferred under the CAT process, the Council will no longer have responsibility for setting fees and charges for the pavilion and associated sports pitches.

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### Careline

- 5.6 Careline is the Council's community alarm service to vulnerable residents. The Careline service is a discretionary service and as such needs to move to a cost-neutral position.
- 5.7 Residents in the Council's Independent Living Schemes have a Careline alarm and linked smoke detector and pay for this service via their rent account. In the recent client survey with around 500 responses, 92% of clients were satisfied with the service and 72% of clients agreed that the costs for Careline were reasonable.
- 5.8 Clients living in the community opt to have the service as a means of safety to call for assistance in the event of an emergency. Careline offer two different products.
- Digital Hub – The digital hub runs from a SIM card installed within the alarm and allows for remote reprogramming, remote fault reporting and diagnostics. This alarm also has additional sensors reprogrammed to help residents live independently including smoke detectors as part of the package.
  - Ownfone – This device is seen as a basic package that can be used to call for assistance should the client face an emergency. The device acts as a mobile phone and therefore does need charging regularly. This device cannot have additional sensors such as a smoke detector attached to it.
- 5.9 The current charges are as follows:

Type	Cost Per Week	Number of Clients
Alarm – Full Rate	£6.84	659
Digital Hub	£7.17	272
Ownfone	£6.24	3
<b>Total:</b>		<b>934</b>

- 5.10 The national digital switchover is currently taking place. This means that the old analogue lines will be switched off in favour of a new digital service via a broadband router. This has implications for the Careline community alarm service as current equipment that plugs into a client's traditional telephone line may not be compatible. The cost of a new digital hub is circa £255 with an annual SIM card subscription cost of £36 per year after the second year. It has been agreed to join Runnymede and Surrey Heath Councils' Digital framework tender to procure the digital equipment to secure efficiencies and bulk discount economies.
- 5.11 The income received from Careline fees and charges is not sufficient to cover all the cost of the digital switchover required. The Government's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allows for digital equipment to be purchased if insufficient income is generated from Careline clients. This approach is being used by most District and Borough Councils in Surrey. The Council is planning to allocate £50,000 from the DFG grant towards the purchase of digital equipment in 2024/25 and £150,000 in 2025/26.

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- 5.12 Given the challenging financial position faced by the Council, it is no longer able to subsidise discretionary services, such as, Careline. It is therefore necessary for the service to move towards a cost-neutral position by increasing income and/or making cost efficiencies. As set out in the Guiding Principles, all discretionary services need to move to a position of cost-neutrality.
- 5.13 A detailed review of costs undertaken during 2024/25 has highlighted that historically fees and charges for the Careline service have not covered the full cost (inclusive of overheads) of providing this service. It has been identified that Careline is currently operating at a £66,000 deficit, including the cost of equipment depreciated over 7 years.
- 5.14 The next table sets out the current Careline charges across other district and borough councils in Surrey. These prices are normally increased annually each April.

District and Borough	Weekly Charge 2024/25
Woking	£6.84/£7.17 (Digital)
Spelthorne (MV Life)	£4.89/£6.00 (Digital)
Waverley	£4.75/£6.00 (Digital)
Surrey Heath (RBC)	£5.15/£6.46 (Digital)
Mole Valley (MV Life)	£4.89/£6.00 (Digital)
Elmbridge (MV Life)	£4.89/£6.00 (Digital)
Guildford	£5.10/£6.00 (Digital)
Runnymede (RBC)	£5.15/£6.46 (Digital)

- 5.15 This confirms that the Council is already offering the most expensive community alarm service in Surrey. It is recognised that this makes delivering further increases to fees and charges more challenging for the Council and its clients. It is anticipated that other Districts and Borough Councils are likely to be subsidising the true cost of this service. However, Woking Borough Council is not in a position to subsidise discretionary services and as such, fees and charges form a key part of retaining the service.
- 5.16 There are numerous alternative private providers of community alarms available in the marketplace at a lower cost. The majority of clients do have the option to use other service providers if the price increase proves unaffordable for them. However, these may not provide the same level of service as the Council's Careline service. For example, the equipment is usually sent in the post and the client or family has to install it; there may be no range test to ensure the right equipment is suitable for the property and that it covers all rooms and garden; the physical and mental capacity/needs of the client may not be considered; a private provider may offer no additional services nor signposting to local partners.
- 5.17 In the short term, the Council will need to review and increase its charges for the Careline in order to close the funding deficit, particularly given the additional costs associated with the digital rollout. To achieve full cost recovery, a circa 20% increase would be required. However, in keeping with the guiding principle to consider the impact on vulnerable groups, it is proposed that this is phased over the term of the

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Medium Financial Strategy (3 years). Therefore, an increase of 7% is recommended for 2025/26 to be applied to all Careline products/offers. This increase will generate additional income of c.£26,000 as a contribution towards the cost of the service, marking a significant step towards the service becoming cost neutral.

- 5.18 However, current income budgets for the service are based on demand levels that are not currently being achieved in practice. To re-base the income budget to align with expected demand levels will require a downward adjustment of c.£21,000 to the income budget. Combined with the proposed fee increase, this will result in net additional budgeted income of £5,171 towards the cost of the service in 2025/26.
- 5.19 Whilst a 7% increase will not completely remove the subsidy, any greater increase would be considered unaffordable to vulnerable clients in just one year.
- 5.20 Similar price increases should be expected for this service in the following 2 years in order to become fully cost-neutral, unless the Council can reduce its overhead costs and/or find a more cost-efficient alternative delivery model. This will include continuing discussions with other District and Borough Councils to determine if partnership working could offer a more cost-effective solution for our clients in the future.
- 5.21 Additional telecare equipment (i.e. fall detectors, bed sensors, door sensors, etc.) is also provided by the service where residents' needs require additional support through sensors or other technology. This additional equipment will be priced dependent on the equipment used and applied consistently to all who access that piece of equipment.

### **Hale End Court Extra Care**

#### Hair Salon

- 5.22 The hair salon can be hired by an external hairdresser to benefit the tenants of Hale End Court and any day visitors. In April 2023, the hire charge increased from £45 to £50 per day (and £25 to £30 per half day). The actual charges for the haircut, wash, perm, etc. are determined by the hairdresser providing the service, but it is considerably cheaper than a High Street hairdresser. The Hale End Court hairdresser currently visits every fortnight for half a day. The charge for hiring the hair salon is not proposed to increase due to the challenges faced in securing a hairdresser prepared to operate at Hale End Court on a regular basis. Any increases could result in the loss of this service for tenants as it would make the hire commercially unviable.

#### Private Hire of rooms – Extra Care

- 5.23 In April 2023, a new charge of £15 per hour was introduced for hire of rooms at Hale End Court as one offs exclusively for parties, wakes, etc. Since this charge was introduced, there have been no bookings. It is therefore proposed to keep the charge at £15 with a review of marketing the usage of the facility.

#### Day Care

- 5.24 The daycare offer was relocated to Hale End Court from the community centres in January 2024. In order to contribute towards the cost of this community service which

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had previously been provided for free, a charge was introduced of £20 per user per day from January 2024. This included the Community Meals cost of a two-course lunch and drink of £9. The remaining £11 is income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to contribute to staffing and premises costs.

- 5.25 Fees for alternative day care in Woking fees typically range from £48 - £84 per day, but they do cater for higher support needs and often include transport costs. The Council's Day Care charge does not include the cost of transportation, which is currently undertaken by Woking Community Transport.
- 5.26 The Day Care income supports the costs of the Hale End Court support staff team and facilities, along with the meals service at the scheme, both of which are currently operating at a deficit. It is recommended that the Daycare charge should increase by 20% from the current rate of £20 to £24 per day. This will generate circa £4,600 additional contributions towards Hale End Court costs (HRA) and £1,350 additional contribution towards the cost of community meals. The 20% increase in day care reflects a fairer allocation of the full costs of providing day care (meal, staff, energy, building costs, as well as overhead apportionments), whilst remaining competitive with other local providers.

### **Homelink**

- 5.27 HomeLink provides a mandatory service as the Council's Housing Improvement Agency that manages our disabled adaptation via Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). HomeLink is part of the North-West Surrey Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Hub with Spelthorne, Runnymede and Surrey Heath Borough Councils. Woking takes the lead role designed to provide a more consistent approach across the area and to provide efficiencies and savings in service provision.
- 5.28 HomeLink and all North-West Surrey Councils charge a management fee to carry out major disabled adaptations at 15% of the cost of the disabled adaptation works. Any increase reduces the amount available to spend on the actual disabled adaptations. The amount of funding available for disabled works has already reduced due to previous cuts in funding from the Council, which enabled discretionary disabled adaptations that sit outside the remit of the DFG legislation. The 15% management charge is proposed to remain unchanged in April 2025.

### **Handyperson Service**

- 5.29 HomeLink manages the Handyperson service for Woking, Runnymede and Surrey Heath Councils. The proposed Handyperson charges will apply across all boroughs. Any income generated goes back into the running of the Handyperson service.
- 5.30 Most of the work carried out by the Handyperson service is preventative and to assist hospital discharges, enabling residents to remain safe, secure and independent in their homes for as long as possible. The volume of this work is increasing due to the aging population, the longer-term effects of the pandemic and growing ties with Adult Social Care and Health through the Alliance Integrated Care Partnership. There is no charge to the residents for this work as it is covered by grants and there is no actual cost to the Council.



**DIY Handyperson Service**

- 5.31 As most time available for Handyperson Service is dedicated to health and safety work especially to assist hospital discharge, the time available for chargeable DIY work is reducing. There is still a growing need for such a paid for DIY service where a resident wants a simple job undertaken, like putting up shelves, curtain poles, etc. which are often too small a job for private contractors to be interested in and they have no family/friends to help. There is also trust in the Council's service which is why clients are willing to wait for the service.
- 5.32 It is proposed that the DIY Handyperson charges remain the same for 2025/26 due to the capacity of the service to undertake such works within a reasonable timeframe. The priority will always be hospital discharge and safety works. At the same time, the Council needs to ensure that the service is accessible for older, disabled, or vulnerable residents at a reasonable cost.
- 5.33 The proposed hourly charges for traditional Homelink customers (elderly, disabled or vulnerable) are for labour (unlike a private contractor the Council does not charge a separate call out fee). The cost of any materials purchased, including overheads, is also charged to the customer. The charges are:

	<b>DIY hourly charge including VAT April 25</b>
Routine DIY	£48
Minor Electrical Work	£64
Minor Plumbing Work	£52
Assisting voluntary organisations	£55

- 5.34 The recommendation is not to increase DIY Handyman charges for 2025-26 as minimal income is received due to the service no longer having the capacity to undertake this work.

**Independent Living Pop-In Service**

- 5.35 The Independent Living Pop-In Service was introduced as an additional service for our most vulnerable, elderly and disabled residents of the borough based on the resident's individual needs and not where they live. This service is tenure neutral and focuses more on a befriending support for families.
- 5.36 The service was aimed to support any resident of the borough to live independently at home as long as possible in a safe and secure environment. It is intended to be flexible to cover short periods of time (i.e. following hospital discharge, illness or bereavement or when family/carers go on holiday). It provides an hour visit by an Independent Support Officer, but does not include any personal care, cleaning or gardening.
- 5.37 The charge was previously increased to £25 per hour in April 2024. It is recommended that this is not increased further as there is low take-up of the service. However, in time of crisis, it remains a useful option for families to consider. The service was introduced as an extension to the existing tasks provided by the

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Independent Living Officers hence no extra costs. As such, any income generated helps to offset the current costs of this service.

### Community Meals Service

5.38 The Community Meals Service comprises of two elements - Community Meals Delivery Service and Lunch and café provision in Hale End Court.

#### Community Meals Delivery Service

- 5.39 Community Meals is a discretionary service and receives only £21,000 per annum external funding from Surrey County Council via a Service Level Agreement. The recommendations in this report are aimed at safeguarding the service for the most vulnerable residents. Given the Council's financial situation, it is essential the service continues to move towards a self-funding position for 2025/26. The proposed increase in fees and charges is an essential component in achieving this.
- 5.40 During the Covid years, client numbers peaked at over 230 clients but have now reduced back to pre-Covid levels. Community meals currently deliver 827 meals a week and finished 2023/24 with a decline in numbers of 13.3% compared to 2022/23 with a regular 150 clients. The menu offer has been adapted over the past 12 months and will continue to change to offer variety and flexibility to cater for all health needs.
- 5.41 Community Meals now has a varied client base with an increase in clients with complex support needs due to mental health, alcohol, or drug related issues. The Community Meals Service is more than a meal. By regular and often daily contact with the most vulnerable and isolated residents, staff can monitor their client's health and condition of the home and make the necessary referrals to other services and agencies to get involved when needed. Many clients have no family or visitors other than the Meals Delivery Officer, who might be the only person they see, therefore reducing isolation and relieving pressures on other services.
- 5.42 Most client's properties are entered by key safe and lunch is plated up and presented to the client as they often have severe mobility issues. The charge for a meal must therefore remain affordable and cost should not be a barrier to our most vulnerable residents.
- 5.43 The recent annual client satisfaction survey had a response rate of over 90% of which 92% were satisfied with the service provided with 71.6% seeing improvement in additional outcomes including feeling well nourished, happier, healthier and more independent. 43% of clients said that they had visited the GP less since having community meals. 77% of clients felt the cost of meals was reasonable.
- 5.44 Since the increase in fees in January 2024, only 1 client stopped receiving the service due to cost. In the first 6 months of this year, we gained 29 new clients, but 44 left due to moving to care homes or passing away. Therefore, the overall number of clients has reduced.
- 5.45 The cost in relation to food and resources needed to maintain the service has increased annually. There are still price uncertainties due to how the cost of living, fuel and food prices will impact and potentially cause additional price increases.

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Apetito is the contracted food supplier and their price increases over the past few years are shown below.

<b>Apetito Price Increase</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Meal increase</b>
2024	4.0%
2023	8.0%
2022	9.8%

5.46 The Apetito 4% price increase in April 2024 (notified every six months) reduced the impact of the 2024/25 price increase agreed by the Council last year and did not enable the deficit to be reduced as much as planned. The Council's current two course lunch and frozen charge of £6.98 is competitive and is still not the highest across Surrey, with Waverley offering a service at a higher price. All districts and boroughs use the same supplier for the meals. The April 2024/25 charges from some Surrey district and boroughs are:

<b>Council</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Tea</b>
	<b>Weekday Price</b>	<b>Weekend Price</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Price</b>
Epsom and Ewell	£5.95	£5.95	N/A	£3.30
Mole Valley	£6.00	£6.10	£1.70	£3.55
Elmbridge	£6.00	£6.10	£1.70	£3.55
Runnymede	£5.00	£5.75	N/A	£3.25
Surrey Heath	£4.40	£5.35	N/A	£2.80
Guildford	£4.60	£4.60	N/A	N/A
Spelthorne	£4.00	£4.00	N/A	N/A
Tandridge	no service	no service	no service	no service
<b>Woking</b>	<b>£6.98</b>	<b>£7.09</b>	<b>£1.58</b>	<b>£3.32</b>
Reigate and Banstead	no service	no service	no service	no service
Waverley operate two different services from centres	£7.00 £12.00	£7.00 N/A	N/A	£6.00

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- 5.47 In April 2023, the meals delivery van contract ended. A procurement exercise resulted in a more cost-effective model of delivery with more environmentally friendly electric hybrid cars delivering via hot boxes. Current evaluations of this new service model have provided a saving of £18,000 per annum.
- 5.48 Considerable efficiencies have recently taken place both in processes and staffing, and further changes are being explored to further reduce the deficit. The past few years have been challenging for the meal's delivery service. Now with the "cost of living crisis" again food costs, fuel and increased staffing costs are making an impact on the viability of the service. There is uncertainty on client numbers going forward, but a radio advertisement, social network marketing campaign and promotional offers are planned for this winter to increase up take.
- 5.49 Despite the cost savings, the service operates at a circa £157,000 deficit, inclusive of overheads. To achieve full cost recovery, a circa 45% increase would be required, along with delivering further proposed cost savings. It is accepted that this would be unaffordable for clients and in keeping with the guiding principle to consider the impact on vulnerable groups, it is proposed that this is phased over the term of the Medium Financial Strategy (3 years). Therefore, it is recommended to increase the costs of all meals by 15% and weekend meals by 25% in April 2025. This will reduce the deficit and start moving towards the Community Meals Service covering its costs and enable the service to be retained. The impact of this increase will be assessed in the EQIA.
- 5.50 Similar price increases should be expected for this service in the following 2 years in order to become fully self-funding, unless the Council can reduce its overhead costs, attract additional SLA income and/or find a further cost efficiencies.
- 5.51 The 2025/26 proposed fees and charges will result in potential increased income of £48,844. The recommended increase would result in the actual charges being:

<b>Meal Type</b>	<b>Current Price</b>	<b>1 April 25 increase</b>	<b>Increase per meal</b>
2 course lunch	£6.98	£8.03	£1.05
Weekend two course lunch	£7.09	£8.86	£1.77
Tea time offer	£3.32	£3.82	£0.50
Breakfast offer	£1.58	£1.82	£0.24

### **Café Provision at Hale End Court**

- 5.52 Historically the Community Meals Team provided food in all community centre dining rooms and cafes. This model has changed to reduce costs and the running of these services are now with the voluntary/private sector.
- 5.53 The Community Meals Service has two cooks based at Hale End Court who provide two course hot lunches, Monday to Friday, for the tenants and day care visitors (approximately 7,000 lunches per annum). In addition, they provide catering for

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special events (such as Valentines Day, Burns Night, Easter, etc), afternoon teas and provide all snacks in the café which is open daily. New tenants at Hale End Court have a mandatory charge for five meals a week as part of their tenancy terms. In order to recover the full costs of the meals service at Hale End Court, an additional £31,000 income needs to be generated and a 10% price increase is recommended. The increased charge of £9.90 remains good value for a 2-course hot meal in a restaurant/café setting.

### Leisure Centres

- 5.54 The fees and charges for the leisure centres are influenced by market dynamics and external inflationary pressures. To ensure the Woking contract remains regionally competitive, benchmarking has been conducted, and in-line with the Council's MTFs commercial principles, some fees and charges have increased above inflation. Concessionary pricing will still be available for senior citizens, individuals on income support, the unemployed, students, and disabled users. All proposed fees and charges will come into effect from 1 April 2025.
- 5.55 The Council is currently projected to collect a management fee of £1.34 million by the end of this year for this contract. The proposed prices are anticipated to generate a £107,488 additional management fee income in 2025/26 financial year.
- 5.56 The table below compares key leisure centre price proposals with those of other regional leisure centres. In most cases, the proposed price increase aligns with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which was 2.5% in December 2024. However, due to market forces and external inflationary pressures, some prices have been increased above this rate where necessary, which will allow the Operator to maximise receipts and in-turn the management fee paid to the Council, with the ambition to move towards a full cost recovery position.

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Fee item	Guildford Spectrum	Eclipse Leisure Centre (opening Oct '24) - Staines	Rainbow Leisure Centre, Epsom	Leatherhead Leisure Centre	2024 charge and proposed % Increase for Woking for 2025	Woking Leisure centres - Proposed charges 2025
Casual Swim Adult	£10.50	£6.30	£6.55	£7.00	£8.50 3.53%	£8.80
Learn to Swim Child lessons (30 mins)	£37.65	£45.00	£35.00	£35.80	£39.00 2.56%	£40.00
Gym Monthly direct debit	£55.00	£55.00	£44.00	£52.00	£55.00 5.09%	£57.80 (WLC)
					£39.00 5.13%	£41.00 (Sbox)
					£46.00 5.00%	£48.30 (ELC)
Swim Monthly direct debit	£39.00	£30.00	£40.00	£40.00	£40.00 5.00%	£42.00 (WLC)
					£32.00 5.94%	£33.90 (ELC)
Gym casual rate per visit (standard)	£15.00	£11.50	£13.00	£15.85	£10.60 2.83%	£10.90
Group exercise class casual fee	£8.00	£9.20	£10.00	£11.00	£9.50 10.53%	£10.50

5.57 Membership fees are proposed to increase on average at 5% on 2024 prices. This includes gym, swim and learn to swim membership. Private swimming lessons are also proposed to go up in line with CPI at around 3%. Group exercise classes are seeing a proposed higher increase at 10% but with fees still in line with the local market. Sports hall sessions, such as badminton, short tennis, squash and table tennis, have been proposed to increase by 10% although fees for these sessions are relatively low. Outdoor tennis sessions at Eastwood Leisure Centre have also been proposed to increase by 10% with the fees still substantially lower than those charged for the courts at Woking Park and West Byfleet. Lastly, the aqua memberships at Eastwood Leisure Centre are proposed to increase by 12-13% in order align them with similar fees at Pool in the Park.

5.58 The Council is currently in the process of procuring a new operator for its leisure centres. The existing contract with Freedom Leisure Limited will expire on 30 November 2025. As a result, new prices can be established with the chosen operator during the mobilisation period in the latter half of 2025.

### 6.0 Place Directorate

6.1 The Place Directorate sets discretionary fees and charges for Environmental Health, Housing Standards and Licensing, Planning Services, Building Control, Open Space Hire, Waste and Recycling and Parking Services. Full details are set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

#### Environmental Health, Housing Standards and Licensing

- 6.2 All fees and charges for the above service areas have been reviewed and benchmarked against other Surrey authorities. Some are set by central government or have reached maximum ceilings set by government / legislation. Many of our fees are required to be cost recovery only, example animal licensing, scrap metal and other. Where changes are proposed or new fees are being introduced, these have been considered in the context of the principles set out at the beginning of the report.
- 6.3 Licensing fees are not allowed to make a profit. A licensing officer was lost in the Phase 2 restructure and the cost of the service is therefore less and the service cannot increase fees bearing this in mind. Licensing fees are increasing in April 2025 but to the level they were meant to be in 2024/25. These were due to increase in January 2024 but not implemented due to an administrative error. Increasing in April 2025 to last year's proposed fees will recover service costs only.
- 6.4 Housing Standards fees have been reviewed and increased where possible.
- 6.5 Environment Health fees have also been increased where possible but numbers of stray dogs is reduced due to new laws to microchip/collar dogs.
- 6.6 Pest control fees have been increased meaning they are becoming more in line with the private sector (no longer subsidised) so whilst we break even on our contract, numbers of treatments seem to have declined. We also had a poor summer meaning wasps were not as common as usual. Therefore, predictions of pest income for this coming year are not as healthy and show no increase.
- 6.7 The following fees are proposed to be increased from 1 April 2025, pest control treatments for fleas, cockroaches and bedbugs, the collection of stray dogs and private water supply sampling and investigations. Pest control and stray dog fees are being increased to ensure external contract charges are covered. For private hire and Hackney Carriage taxi driver, vehicle and operator licence fees, previously agreed but unimplemented due to the same administrative error, fee increases will take effect from 1 April 2025.
- 6.8 New fees introduced during 2024/25 have been added to the schedule for the first time for pavement licences and film certification, which have been introduced to cover the cost of the service.
- 6.9 Please note that as of October 2024, Licencing has an overspend of £107k and Environment Health and Housing Standards break even.

### Planning Services

- 6.10 All fees and charges for the above area have been reviewed, and where appropriate benchmarked against charges from other authorities. Where changes are proposed or new fees are being introduced, these have been considered in the context of the principles set out at the beginning of the report. It is proposed to increase the fixed pre-application charges in line with last year's increase in statutory planning fees. This will mean a 25% increase for most categories and a 35% increase for a major scheme.
- 6.11 It is also proposed to introduce an administrative fee to cover the costs of dealing with invalid planning applications. A Section 106 monitoring fee is proposed in line with standard practice elsewhere which would be set at £1,000 per obligation within each agreement. The introduction of administrative fees for requests that fall outside the statutory planning processes are also being put forward. This is to reflect officer time and resources associated with dealing with those enquiries. The specific fee proposals are set out below.

#### Changes to an existing discretionary fee:

- 6.12 It is proposed to increase dropped kerb letters/ enquiries to increase to £100 (from £50).

#### New discretionary fees:

- 6.13 Planning applications are primarily submitted via the Planning Portal which is a nationwide portal. The Planning Portal introduced an administration fee to process the applications three years ago. This fee is currently £70. It is proposed that the Council introduces a similar administration fee for non-portal applications. Whilst this would only affect a limited number of applications, based on last year's number of applications, this could achieve an additional £7k of income.
- 6.14 39% of planning applications received this year to date (430 out of 1,100 applications) were invalid. It is proposed to introduce an administration fee for returned invalid applications to reflect the costs involved in this process. Following benchmarking against other Surrey local planning authorities, the proposal is that the administration fee should be 25% of fee received. It is also proposed to introduce an administration fee for invalid applications where additional information is subsequently provided to make that application valid. Having benchmarked against other Surrey local planning authorities, the proposal is that the administration fees should be:
- £225 including VAT for invalid major applications.
  - £150 including VAT for invalid minor/non-major/new drawing etc. applications.
  - £75 including VAT for householders and certificates (excludes priors and non-Material Amendment).
- 6.15 A new fee is proposed of £125 for confirmation of permitted development rights to cover the costs associated with background checks required. A fee of £200 is proposed for confirmation of compliance with an enforcement notice.



## **Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26**

- 6.16 A Section 106 monitoring fee of £1,000 is proposed per obligation (excluding Strategic Access Management and Monitoring – SAMM - obligations which are monitored by another authority) within an agreement to provide for the ongoing monitoring of all obligations which has been informed by benchmarking other local planning authorities.
- 6.17 Fee for Habitat Regulation applications (which are required to address the Special Protection Area issues for developments secured through a prior approval change of use to residents) to increase from £35 to £150 for up to 10 dwellings and £300 for 10 or more dwellings. This has also been benchmarked with other local planning authorities and reflects the amount of required to comply with this new area of planning legislation.
- 6.18 Local planning authorities can charge applicants a fee to join their self build and custom build registers and an annual renewal fee on top of that. Within Surrey, six of the 11 district and borough councils charge. The fee varies from £27 to £100 for initial registration and from £15.00 to £31.70 annual renewal fee. It is recommended that a charge of £30 for initial registration and assessment is introduced from 1 April 2025 with an annual fee of £15 from 1 April 2026 (subject to further review) to cover the costs of administration and management of the register.
- 6.19 On statutory fees for planning applications, over which the Council has no discretion, for most applications the government will apply a 1.7% increase from 1 April, in line with CPI, following 25% and 35% increases last year. However, the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment and Transitional Provision) Regulations 2025, coming into force from 1 April 2025, makes further changes and increases fees for certain application types, including householder applications and prior approvals, by 100%. These increases will bring the fees closer to the cost of determining these application types, but will still not lead to full cost recovery for this statutory service.

### **Street Naming and Numbering**

- 6.20 Street naming and numbering (SNN) is a statutory responsibility managed by the Council. The management and administration of addressing in the borough prevents the duplication of property names and numbers.
- 6.21 At a time of rising service delivery costs and in the context of a need for services to be self-funding as far as possible plus similar increases in fees already being implemented by most other local authorities in the county and nationally, it is appropriate for the Council to increase fees for street naming and numbering services by 20%. Experience of charging since April has also highlighted the opportunity to further refine charges to better reflect not only service costs but also a fuller range of the services offered.

### **Building Control**

- 6.22 A 10% increase is proposed to keep building control fees and charges in line with fees of other Surrey borough councils. Building control fees and charges are benchmarked each year against neighbouring councils to ensure they remain competitive. The Council has historically been charging less than its neighbours. For example: Surrey Heath and Guildford are both proposing a further 5-7% increase for

## Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26

2025/26. The 10% increase better aligns the Council with neighbouring authority fees and charges whilst not exceeding them. It cannot be determined how competitive these are in relation to the private sector building control fees and charges as these are not published.

- 6.23 The Building Safety Act 2022 is placing additional financial burdens on building control services. Many of these costs are directly associated with the determination of building control applications. The additional costs of training staff, BSR audits, increased legislative requirements, scrutiny of applications (to name but some implications of the new act) apply to all councils and the private sector. As a direct result the cost of delivering a building control service has risen the past year, continue to rise and it is clearly essential that the associated fees and charges also rise.
- 6.24 A new hourly rate for 'reversions' (£105 per hour) is proposed. This is an application type which is increasing and is where an application reverts to the Council part way through the building control process from a private building control company. The fees for these applications are set on a case by case basis by applying an hourly rate (which is currently £85 per hour). These applications require greater management scrutiny so justify a higher hourly rate.

### **Open Space Hire**

- 6.25 An increase of circa 2% is proposed to existing hire rates for both open space events and outdoor fitness classes on council land. Having increased fees for open space hire for fitness classes by 10% in each of the past two years, at the start of last year one of a total of six fitness instructors withdrew which has resulted in a decrease in total yield for this year. Having assessed against other local boroughs and districts, the Council's fees are amongst the highest and a similar increase would risk further losses. Therefore, an increase of approximately 2% was considered appropriate in this instance. The estimated yield for next year will be lower due to the loss of that one fitness instructor, even with the proposed increase, unless any new outdoor fitness instructors sign up.
- 6.26 The fees for open space hire for events were partially restructured, taking some ideas from other local boroughs. For those hire types remaining the same, a 2% increase was applied to remain consistent with the uplift for outdoor fitness class licences. Again, this keeps the Council in line with the upper limit of similar fees among local boroughs.
- 6.27 It is also proposed that the commercial event hire rate is split into separate charges for operational and non-operational days, which is a similar approach to a number of other Surrey authorities. Although no commercial event hires are currently anticipated, this will provide greater flexibility should suitable opportunities arise.
- 6.28 The introduction of an additional supplementary fee is also proposed for community events that include a fun fair. This is to reflect the additional officer time required to review fun fair documentation. This is only applicable when the fun fair is operating as part of a community event. Where the fun fair is the main attraction, commercial rates will apply.

## **Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26**

6.29 Despite the fee increase the forecast income will be £1.6k less due to reduction in activity but full cost recovery will still be achieved.

### **Waste and Recycling**

6.30 Residents opting in to the garden waste collection service pay an annual subscription fee of £70 per bin. It is proposed that new joiners pay an additional one-off non-refundable fee of £30 to cover the administration set up and loan of the bin. Four other Surrey boroughs apply a one-off charge between £29 to £46 per bin on top of the first-year subscription fee. For example: a new subscriber for one bin would pay £100 in total (£30 for the bin and £70 for the annual collection charge).

6.31 The current garden waste collection service assumes that most subscribers will continue to renew their subscription and that, as a result, the cost of bins will be recovered over time but this is a risk. Introducing an administration set-up and bin loan charge covers the cost of providing the bin and mitigates this risk.

### **Parking Services**

#### **Strategic Parking Objectives**

6.32 In June 2024 the Executive agreed strategic parking objectives which would provide the specific context for the review of parking fees and charges. The objectives related both to daily tariffs and permits. (EXE24-069 Strategic Parking Objectives, Executive 13 June 2024) All proposals to change car parking charges are required to be in line with these objectives, which are:

1. Ensure that parking income from fees and charges covers the costs of providing the service to residents and local businesses and is in line with the budget requirements.
2. Ensure parking prices support the changing pattern of use of the town centre, both for residents and local businesses, and to ensure that other, more sustainable methods of transport, remain attractive to users.
3. Ensure parking prices are standardised, and simplified, providing a fair and equitable level of fees to all car park users.
4. Ensure parking prices offer good value for money to the public.

#### **Off-Street Car Parks Overview**

6.33 In 2023/24 total car park income was £6.2 million. Of which, day tariff income from town centre car parks contributed £5 million. Whilst the total car park income increased by c£700k compared to 2022/23, it remains around £1 million less than pre-Covid pandemic levels resulting in a significant shortfall against the budget.

6.34 The daily tariffs for off-street car parks have remained unchanged since February 2023. The current and proposed tariffs are set out below. These charges balance the recommendations from two external advisors, one instructed by the Council and the other instructed by Victoria Square Woking Limited (the Red and Green car parks within Victoria Place). Information captured by the new car park management system

## Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26

has been used by Officers and the advisors to provide intelligence led/data driven recommendations.

### Town Centre car parks (Victoria Place, Victoria Way, Brewery Road & Heathside)

- 6.35 There are currently twelve separate tariff bands for day tariff parking in the town centre car parks. It is proposed the number of tariff points is reduced to six. The key changes to the rationalised tariff points are:
- 6.36 The hourly rate increases from £1.80 to £2.20. This is compared to the current 2024 charges in the local towns of Guildford (£4 up to three hours), Camberley (£2.60 up to two hours), Bracknell and Basingstoke (£2 up to one hour).
- 6.37 No change to the full day rate of £15 (this is the charge for parking for six to twenty-four hours). This charge plays a vital part in the overall future determination of the parking permit strategy as it becomes the strategic pivot point, determining the appropriate discount measurement for permit price setting. This rationale is explained later under the permit heading.
- Parking for up to three hours reduces by £1.50 (from £5 to £3.50).
  - Parking for up to six hours reduces by £0.50 (from £8 to £7.50)
  - Parking for three to 24 hours on a Sunday reduces by £1 (from £4.50 to £3.50).
  - The evening and overnight charge (twelve hours parking from 6pm to 6am) is reduced by £0.20 (from £2.20 to £2.00).

### Woodlands Avenue Long Stay Car Park

- 6.38 During 2023/24 Woodlands Avenue car park generated a day tariff income of £29k. The current tariff structure was established when the Council operated two West Byfleet car parks with Woodlands Avenue intended to be a car park for residents and employees within the village only whilst the other car park - is no longer in existence - was publicised as a visitor and commuter car park.
- 6.39 The proposed rationalisation of tariffs in Woodlands Avenue Car Park will reduce the number of tariff points from three to two. Current and proposed models are shown below:

#### A. Current Day Tariff Structure for Woodlands Avenue Car Park

<b>Length of Stay</b>	<b>Current Tariff Price (Gross)</b>
Up to four hours (Mon - Fri)	£1.50
Up to six hours (Mon - Fri)	£3.00
All day after 9.30am	£4.50

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### B. Proposed Day Tariff Structure for Woodlands Avenue Car Park:

Length of Stay	Proposed Tariff Price (Gross)
All day (calendar day) (Mon – Fri)	£4.50
All day (calendar day) (Sat – Sun)	£2.00

- 6.40 The recommended tariff structure enables customers who may be commuting by train to make use of this car park alongside other users, and at a more competitive rate than the adjacent train station car park. The introduction of charges at weekends will further contribute to the viability of this car park and generate revenue that is needed to maintain it to an appropriate standard.
- 6.41 These proposals for changes to car park charges are in line with the parking strategic objectives set out in paragraph 6.32 and aim to ensure parking prices are standardised, simplified and provide a fair and equitable level of fees to car park users. Streamlined tariffs are easier for customers to understand and reduce, for example, the complaints received.
- 6.42 It should be noted that these car parking fee proposals have been approved by the Victoria Square Woking Limited Board as owners of the Red and Green car parks. All parking fees and charges are subject to statutory 21-day notice of variation in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Parking Places (Variation of Charges) Act 2017 and a public consultation may be considered when introducing new charges.

#### Parking Permit and Season Ticket Charges

- 6.43 There are currently 65 different permit options grouped under the following main headings:
- CO2 - the price is linked to the CO2 rating of a vehicle.
  - Resident permits limited to those living within specified town centre areas.
  - Business permits for businesses located within Woking requiring multiple parking permits.
  - Public Service Rate permits for limited public sector partners.
- 6.44 These permits are all discounted against the day rate and based on 220 days per annum, (equivalent to 44 weeks working 5 days a week allowing eight weeks for flexible working, annual leave, bank/public holidays, and sickness.) The level of discount, however, is inconsistent and varies from between 20% and 92%. It is also important to note that for most of these permits there was no increase/ change to the rates from 2009 to 2022, when a percentage increase was introduced for that year and the following year. For some permits there has been no increase since 2009.
- 6.45 This high number of permit options is considered to be excessive and the level and range of discounts (from the day tariff equivalents) are at unsustainable levels. As it stands, they do not offer a fair and equitable rate when all car park users are taken

## Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26

into consideration. Following a detailed review, and on advice from experts, it is recommended that the current structure is rationalised to simplify the provision for the customer, support administration, and align the Council to its commercial strategies. That review has been informed by benchmarking over 44 other car park operators including Surrey authorities, statistical neighbours, and some private operators. In relation to Town Centre, Off-Street Parking in Surrey Towns where a resident permit is offered, the following rates have been taken into consideration:

- Camberley (Main Sq.) £1,530
- Guildford (York Road) £2,677
- Epsom (Ashley Centre) £2,400
- Reigate £1,395
- Woking (Proposed) £1,035
- Esher £660
- Walton on Thames £600

6.46 Benchmarking has been carried out against comparable permits considering the town centre offering, parking proximity to the town centre, quality, security, and availability e.g. the Woking offering is 24x7x365. Whilst offers vary widely, the list above provides a reasonable comparison.

6.47 In order to rationalise permits across the Council's portfolio and bring permits to a structured, proportional discount rate against the day rate, it is proposed that a range of changes are made to the pricing structure. The main recommendations are:

- Rationalise the number of permit bands from 65 to 26.
- Move towards reducing the maximum discount to 25% for individuals and 40% for resident permits.
- Business permits have a starting discount of 20% (increasing subject to bulk purchase numbers). The Public Service Rate permit for partners is moved to a 30% discount against the day rate.
- Continue to incentivise a lower emission band in the town centre, Woodlands Avenue and Woking Park car parks. Create a Lower CO2 band of up to 135 g/km (previously Bands A - C) and a Higher CO2 band of 136g/km and above (previously Bands D-G). Lower bands offer a 25% discount against the day rate while upper bands offer a 10% discount.

6.48 A five-year phased implementation is proposed to ease the financial impact on individual customers where increases are significant and to provide new quarterly and monthly payment options to support this. A three year phased implementation to ease the financial impact on business customers where increases are less significant. An extended phased implementation is proposed to ease the financial impact on individual customers where increases are significant and to provide new quarterly and monthly payment options to support this. In practice the discount for resident permits will be 47% within 5 years, the Public Sector Rate will be 35% within 5 years, Woodlands lower band will be 37% and upper band 29%, Woking Park

## Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26

permits will be 47% for a lower band and 41% for upper band. The implementation will continue beyond 5 years where necessary to achieve the targets above.

- 6.49 Introduce a £25 charge for Blue Badge Permits to all new applicants to cover the cost of administration. Permits are provided in line with blue badge expiry dates and last for three years. The proposed charge is to reflect the fact that cost of administering the service is substantial. There are frangible chip stickers that need to be applied to blue badges, readers placed in the barriers and an extraordinary amount of administration time expended on handling and processing applications and supporting users of the scheme.
- 6.50 The permits are issued to match the expiry date of the blue badge which in most cases is three years. This would be applied to new applicants and renewals, not retrospectively to existing permit holders. For those that legitimately use the scheme, a £25 cost (equivalent to £8.33 a year) is a reasonable request to benefit from unlimited free parking in Woking town centre car parks. For those that do not wish to pay, there on-street parking places that remain free throughout the town centre. Usage data confirms that over a third of all applicants do not actually ever make any use of the permit at any point. Some of these applicants are based on the South Coast, Wales and Newcastle. The cost of permits applied for but not used is approximately £10k a year.
- 6.51 For those that legitimately use the scheme, a £25 cost (equivalent to £8.33 a year) is a reasonable request to benefit from unlimited free parking in Woking town centre car parks. For those that do not wish to pay, there on-street parking places that remain free throughout the town centre.
- 6.52 Full details of the existing permit structure and proposed changes for 25/26 are set out in Appendix 2.

### **7.0 Corporate Resources Directorate**

- 7.1 The Corporate Resources Directorate discretionary fees and charges services are Land Charges, CCTV, Property Services (Garden and Grazing Licences and Vehicular Access) and Water Course Consent. Full details are set out in Appendix 3 of this report.

#### **Land Charges**

- 7.2 The national Local Land Charges Programme make His Majesty's Land Register the sole registering authority and official search provider in line with the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015. The Council completed the migration process to transfer the data to the national digital registry in April 2024. Local Land Charge searches are no longer provided by the Council apart from some non-Surrey County Council Con29 questions. Surrey County Council increase their fees each year and these fees will be updated once notification is received. Any charges retained have been increased by +5% and are reflected in the new 2025/26 fees and charges.

#### **CCTV**

- 7.3 Charges for the investigation and supply of CCTV data mostly to insurance companies have been updated to reflect increases in staffing and maintenance costs.

## **Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26**

This is the maximum increase that could reasonably be applied without risk of losing the already minimal income. This will be effective from 1 April 2025. The activity levels are minimal and this has been reflected in the revised schedules.

### **Property Services**

- 7.4 For new or renewal of Garden and Grazing Licences and Vehicular Access, charges have been uplifted to reflect increases in staffing and maintenance costs. This is the maximum increase that could reasonably be applied without risk of losing the already minimal income which will result in further maintenance costs. This will be effective from 1 April 2025. For new or renewal of Garden and Grazing Licences and Vehicular Access, charges will be increased by 10% effective 1 April 2025. Income is minimal.

### **Water Course Consent**

- 7.5 Fees have been updated to reflect the current hourly rate however forecast activity has been reduced to reflect actual activity which is minimal.

## **8.0 Implications**

### **Legal**

- 8.1 Local authorities have a variety of powers to charge for specific statutory services set out in statute. The Local Government Act 2003 also provides a power to trade and a power to charge for discretionary service. The Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with a general power of competence that confers on them the power to charge for services.

### **Resources (including finance)**

- 8.2 The changes in non-contract-based fees and charges considered in this report are expected to generate additional income of c.£357,000 in 2025/26 and will also provide the platform to generate additional income in future years.
- 8.3 However, this will be partially offset, as for some services existing income targets had been based on pre-pandemic activity levels that are not currently being achieved.
- 8.4 It is estimated that the adverse adjustment required to bring income budgets into line with existing activity will be c.£172,000.
- 8.5 Officers will monitor the impact of the changes into the new year and report on delivery through the Council's agreed budget monitoring framework.
- 8.6 The table below shows a summary per directorate of the impact of the fees and charges proposals:



## Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26

Directorate	ORIGINAL BUDGET 2024/25	PRICE CHANGE
	£'000	£'000
<b><u>Increase in fees and charges</u></b>		
Communities	1,988	162
Place	8,621	195
Corporate Resources	2	1
<b>TOTAL Increase in fees and charges</b>	<b>10,610</b>	<b>357</b>
<b><u>No change in fees and charges</u></b>		
Communities	0	0
Place	147	0
Corporate Resources	0	0
<b>TOTAL No change in fees and charges</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Reduction in fees and charges due to demand</u></b>		
Communities	468	(15)
Place	371	(80)
Corporate Resources	214	(77)
<b>TOTAL Decrease in fees and charges</b>	<b>1,053</b>	<b>(172)</b>
<b>Net Budget Impact of Fees and Charges</b>	<b>11,810</b>	<b>186</b>

8.7 The table below shows the service areas per directorate that have contributed to the reduction in income from fees and charges because of the reduced activity demand post pandemic.

<b><u>Reduction in fees and charges due to demand</u></b>		
<b>Communities</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>(15)</b>
Homelink	140	(4)
Garage Rents	328	(11)
<b>Place</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>(80)</b>
Parks and Open Spaces	9	(2)
Housing Standards	32	(0)
Taxis And Private Hire	277	(65)
Gambling Act	11	(4)
Pest Control	33	(7)
Dog Control/Animal Welfare	5	(1)
Environmental Health Administration	4	(0)
<b>Corporate Resources</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>(77)</b>
Local Land Charges	208	(72)
Town Centre Management Agreement	5	(5)
Water Course Consent	1	(0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,053</b>	<b>(172)</b>

8.8 While the favourable impact of £186,000 income is below the c.£565,000 targeted income initially agreed in fees/charges-related savings proposals at Executive in December and January, this is mainly because for some services the level of anticipated activity in the 2024/25 budget appears to have been based on pre-Covid activity levels and not on current operations. While current activity trends do generally indicate partial recoveries since the pandemic, activity levels are still not the same as pre-Covid, hence lower income levels.

8.9 As such, these income budgets have been rebased for 2025/26, as set-out in the table.

### Risks and Mitigation

- 8.10 There is a risk that the desired level of extra income may not materialise due to demand levels and general economic factors. The risk will be assessed via budget monitoring and mitigations agreed.

### Consultation, Equality Impact Assessments

- 8.11 There are a few areas that will require an EIA and potential consultation.

### Environment and Climate Change

- 8.12 No direct implications arising from the contents of this report.

## **9.0 Supporting Documents**

### Appendices

Appendix 1 Communities Directorate/

Appendix 2 Place Directorate

Appendix 3 Corporate Services Directorate

Appendix 4 Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

### Background Documents

[Update on Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2025/26 General Fund Budget Report to Executive on 5 December 2024.](#)

**Report Ends**