



Portfolio Holder Report

The portfolio holder will make a decision on this item after seven days have elapsed (including the date of publication).

Report of:	Portfolio Holder	Date of publication
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities, Mark Billington, Corporate Director Environment, Clare James, Corporate Director Resources	Cllr Lynne Bowen, Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder, Cllr Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, Cllr Peter Le Marinel, Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Cllr Lesley McKay, Resources Portfolio Holder, Cllr Simon Bridge, Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder	

Review of Fees and Charges 2024/25

Key decision: Yes

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To confirm proposed fees and charges for the 2024/25 financial year.

2. Corporate priorities

2.1 Increase income generation to support the Council's budget.

2.2 Maximise commercial opportunities and improve the return from council assets, whether that be buildings or land, and deliver efficiencies.

3. Recommendation

3.1 That the proposed fees and charges, as set out in Appendix 1, for the 2024/25 financial year be approved and implemented from 1 April 2024.

4. Background

- 4.1** The Cabinet considers its charging policy as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This was last considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 18 October 2023.
- 4.2** Charging for local services makes a significant contribution to council finances and can be used to influence individuals' choices and to bring benefits to local communities. Charges can be set to encourage or discourage people to use services and through concessions to pursue local objectives. Fees and charges require varying treatment for Value Added Tax (VAT) purposes, dependent upon the goods/services being provided; please consult the VAT code key when referring to the charges in Appendix 2.
- 4.3** The level of income generated by fees and charges, and in particular projected increases which the council can influence, form a key part of the council's financial planning and is therefore reflected in the MTFP.
- 4.4** As a result of the long period of austerity and reduced levels of central government funding there is an increased emphasis on income generation and working towards sustainable services.
- 4.5** Some fees and charges are set on a cost recovery basis; owing to recent high levels of inflation, the council is experiencing increased contractual and service costs. Where fees are due to be uplifted by inflation, the consumer price inflation (CPI) is used; in September 2023 this was 6.7%. In the main, the normal process for approving changes to fees and charges happens once a year, with changes being applied from 1 April.
- 4.6** A consolidated listing of existing individual policies for charging and concessions has been produced and is detailed as Appendix 1 to this report.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio

Fees and charges within the responsibility of the Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio include pest control, environmental permitting, food safety, fishery hygiene, private water supplies, contaminated land, Thornton Little Theatre, Marine Hall, Mount Pavilion, cemeteries, Marsh Mill, countryside, Wyre Estuary Country Park, Rossall Point, outdoor amenity sites and health and wellbeing. Amendments to fees and charges for licensing are the responsibility of the Licensing Committee and will be considered in a separate report.

5.1.1 Pest Control

To ensure that the council does not price itself out of the market and to remain competitive with other suppliers, it is proposed not to increase the fees from 1 April 2024, with one exception. The fee for delivery charges is to be removed as the council no longer delivers products to resident's houses. The current forecast to

subsidise this service in 2023/24 is £46,590 (£57,503 at outturn in 2022/23).

5.1.2 Environmental Permitting

Environmental permitting charges are set by the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and are statutory; the fees for 2024/25 will be in line with those set by DEFRA, however they have yet to be disclosed.

5.1.3 Food Safety

The charges for issuing a Ship Sanitation Certificate are set by the Association of Port Health Authorities (APHA); the fees for 2024/25 have yet to be disclosed. Other food safety charges are proposed to be increased by September's CPI from 1 April 2024 with the exception of the Food Premises Hygiene Re-rating Application which is to remain at the 2023/24 fee level. The Food Export Certificate and Water Sampling fees have been restructured to be more reflective of staff time and other associated costs involved in providing these services.

5.1.4 Fishery Hygiene

These charges are fixed at 1 and 0.5 Euros and to be converted to Sterling using the European Union Central Bank exchange rates.

5.1.5 Private Water Supplies

It is proposed to increase private water charges by September's CPI from 1 April 2024. The fees have also been restructured to ensure clarity that the existing fees are per hours and any travel expenses and laboratory fees will be charged at cost.

5.1.6 Contaminated Land

It is proposed to increase contaminated land charges by September's CPI from 1 April 2024. Please note, the council is not permitted to charge for allowing access to information in situ. However 'reasonable' charges can be made to recover the costs of location information and collating it in order to make it available for inspection.

5.1.7 Thornton Little Theatre and Marine Hall

There is an ongoing consultation exercise to evaluate operations at the theatres and as such, no changes are proposed at this point in time to the 2024/25 fees and charges structure. Following the report evaluation, the fees and charges will be considered with a Portfolio Holder report being submitted as appropriate. The miscellaneous charges for Marine Hall are to be regrouped as "Equipment, Stage Equipment and associated Electricity Charges and Sundries" with prices upon application/enquiry.

5.1.8 Mount Pavilion

No changes are proposed for the pavilion as these are to be reviewed following the theatres consultation exercise.

5.1.9 Cemeteries

Owing to increased costs to the council acquiring memorial granite products, as well as inscription costs, it is proposed to increase these charges by 9%. To reflect increasing staff and other indirect costs, it is proposed to increase all other cemetery related fees by 3% (no uplifts were applied in 2023/24). A new £100 fee is to be charged from 1 April 2024 for the 15 year lease renewal for memorial plaques. Cemeteries were subsidised £105,137 in 2022/23 (although this will have included cyclical one-off costs where income is recovered in future years) and the current forecast for 2023/24 is £30,500. The subsidy costs in any year will also include routine grounds maintenance (non-grave digging) which would be incurred anyway.

5.1.10 Countryside

It is proposed to withdraw the Slide Talks fee owing to lack of capacity and the low level of income it generates. The ranger led group charges are to be in line with those charged at Wyre Estuary Country Park and Rossall Point. The £1 concession for walking events is to be removed as the current fees are set to be all inclusive for all ages and all abilities.

5.1.11 Wyre Estuary Country Park

It is proposed to increase the full day charge from £60 to £65 from 1 April 2024 and the half day charge to remain the same at £40 for the Group Visits at Wyre Estuary Country Park.

5.1.12 Rossall Point

It is proposed to increase the full day charge from £60 to £65 from 1 April 2024 and the half day charge to remain the same at £40 for the Group Visits at Rossall Point.

5.1.13 Outdoor Amenity Sites

There are no changes proposed to charges relating to Outdoor Amenity Sites.

5.1.14 Health and Wellbeing

There are no proposed changes to the charges relating to the health and wellbeing classes.

5.2 Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio

Fees and charges within the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio include car parking and housing.

5.2.1 Car Parking

There are no changes proposed to charges relating to car parking with the exception of the fee for the Motorhome parking increasing from £5 to £7.50 from 1 April 2024. This is to help offset the costs in providing additional facilities. The main pay and display fees

earned the council £428,585 in 2022/23 and are currently forecast to generate £485,000 in 2023/24.

5.2.2 Housing

It is proposed to apply inflationary uplifts across housing service fees from 1 April 2024, rounding to the nearest 50p where appropriate, with the exception of the Disabled Facility Grant admin rate, which remains at 15% of the grant approved, and reverting to £10/job for the Care and Repair Handyman scheme, as the previous increase has seen a reduction in work undertaken.

5.3 Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio

Fees and charges within the responsibility of the Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio include development control, building control, markets, estates and economic development.

The majority of the Building Control fees are set in accordance with the Building Regulations Act 2010, allowing authorities to fix their own charges based on full cost recovery. The relevant Head of Service has the delegated authority to amend these fees as necessary. Similarly, all tenancy matters up to an annual sum of £25,000, including market rents are delegated to the relevant Head of Service. The fees for submitting planning applications required by legislation are set nationally and the current statutory fees came into force from 17 January 2018.

5.3.1 Development Control

The majority of discretionary income relates to pre-application discussion fees, which need to be high enough to maintain a reasonable level of income and low enough to encourage applicants to come forward and seek pre-application meetings. The majority of fees have been increased to reflect staff time involved in these areas, plus a new charge has been included for the agreement of condition confirmation for major applications being £50 from 1 April 2024 onwards.

5.3.2 Building Control

It is not proposed to increase the Building Control fees, effective from 1 April 2024 owing to the current levels within the building control reserve.

5.3.3 Markets

For Fleetwood Market, it is not proposed to increase any charges with the exception of bringing the winter outside market rentals to 50% in line with the summer charges. The charges are to be removed for the outdoor fresh produce kiosks as these are now under lease agreement. The fee for the gazebo hire is also to be removed as these are now included as part of the fee. There is to be a review of the structure of the market charges and any further changes will be approved as part of the review process.

No changes are proposed at Poulton Market.

No changes are proposed for Cleveleys Market charges, apart from the removal of the introductory Food Offer. Whilst not yet formally agreed, if the market moves to an on street location, the fees will be aligned to those at Poulton Market.

The charges at Market House Studio are to remain the same with the following exceptions: Membership Fees are to be removed. The monthly fees for Studio 3 are to increase by 10% from £126 to £138 and Studio 8 is to increase by 20% from £150 to £180 to reflect the space and demand for the facilities available. The structure for the short term bookings at Studio 4 are to include an hourly rate of £18 and for a lunchtime session that spans morning and afternoon periods a fee of £48 will apply, with a reduction of 17% for the morning/afternoon/evening sessions from £30 to £25 and the per day charge will decrease from £60 to £50. (All rates inclusive of VAT at 20%.)

5.3.4 Estates

It is proposed to increase estates charges by September's CPI from 1 April 2024.

5.3.5 Economic Development

As the charges for the Wyre Business Award tickets (for setting up and hosting the awards) are on a cost recovery basis, the proposed 2024/25 charges are yet to be finalised.

5.4 Resources Portfolio

Fees and charges within the responsibility of the Resources Portfolio include legal fees, local land charges, room hire (Civic Centre), street naming and numbering and some miscellaneous areas.

5.4.1 Legal Fees

The authority to determine charges for the recovery of legal costs is delegated to the Corporate Director Resources.

5.4.2 Local Land Charges

The determination of fees and charges for local land charges is delegated to the Corporate Director Resources. The council is required to ensure that, over a three year period, the total income from charges does not exceed the total costs of granting access to property records. There are no proposed changes to the current fees.

5.4.3 Room Hire (Civic Centre)

There are no changes planned for the room hire charges at the Civic Centre apart from weddings which will increase to match those charged at the Mount Pavilion. This is pending a review of

room booking charges following the completion of refurbishment works (nearly finished).

5.4.4 Street Naming and Numbering

It is proposed to increase street naming and numbering charges by an inflationary increase from 1 April 2024.

5.4.5 Communications and Visitor Economy

There are no changes proposed for external graphic design charges.

5.4.6 Private Photocopying

It is proposed to increase photocopying prices by CPI to the nearest 10p from 1 April 2024. This is reflective of increased contract and paper costs incurred by the council.

5.5 Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio

Fees and charges within the responsibility of the Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio include public conveniences, dog welfare, waste management, parks and open spaces and leisure services – playing fields.

5.5.1 Public Conveniences

There are no changes proposed to fees for the use of toilets or radar keys.

5.5.2 Dog Welfare

It is proposed to increase the stray dog fees and charges by 10% to reflect increased kennelling costs and demands on the service. The current subsidy forecast, excluding client side costs, is £16,300 in 2023/24 (£16,559 in 2022/23).

5.5.3 Waste Management

It is proposed to increase the bulky items fees by 10% (£2 on the fee for up to three items) to cover increased contract extension costs and uplifts. The service typically covers its costs (£818 surplus in 2022/23). There are no changes proposed to charges for green waste, administration of waste/recycling containers and street cleansing.

5.5.4 Parks and Open Spaces

It is proposed to increase the charge for Memorial Park to bring the hire of the pavilion in-line with those charged at Wyre Estuary Country Park and Rossall Point. The hourly rate for the Parks Development Officer Activities are to increase to be more reflective of staff costs.

5.5.5 Leisure Development – Playing Fields

Services are provided by Fylde Coast YMCA on behalf of the council and an increase in 2024/25 of around 5% has been

applied to the 2023/24 fees. This is below current inflation but reflects the current state of the pitches.

5.6 Fees and Charges – VAT Review

The council's VAT consultants, PSTax, are in the process of reviewing the VAT liability on the fees and charges and their report is expected by the end of October, with queries to be followed up on as appropriate. Any instances where we are not currently charging VAT but we should be, VAT will be added to the fee at the 20% standard rate. If it is found that we have included VAT in error, the overall fee will remain the same and will be an income benefit to the council.

5.7 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Initial proposals for amendments or increases to fees and charges have been reviewed and discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 20 November 2023, with their recommendations being reported to Portfolio Holders and any amendments agreed included within this report.

6. Alternative options considered and rejected

6.1 Alternative options have been considered throughout the fees and charges review process. However, those presented are felt to represent the best options to contribute towards the costs of providing services and to safeguard the finances of the council.

7. Delegated functions

7.1 The matters referred to in this report are considered under the following executive function delegated to each Portfolio Holder (as set out in Part 3 of the council's constitution): "To determine charges or fees for any relevant service operated within the Portfolio".

Financial, Legal and Climate Change implications	
Finance	The financial implications of the fees and charges will be reflected in the 2024/25 Revenue Estimates which will be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 14 February 2024. Those charges detailed in Appendix 2 will be implemented from 1 April 2024.
Legal	Some services the council provides are mandatory and governed by specific legislation, whilst other services provided are discretionary. Discretionary services are those which the council is permitted to provide but not required to provide. The council has a general power to charge a person for discretionary services under Section 93 of the Local

	<p>Government Act 2003 (“LGA 2003”) and under the power of general competence found in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (“LA 2011”).</p> <p>The overall position on charging is that the council must not charge for a service if legislation prohibits it from doing so. If legislation requires the council to provide a service and to charge for it then we are required to do so. In the absence of specific powers or prohibition on charging services the council may use the powers in either s93 of the LGA 2003 or s1 of LA 2011 to make charges for discretionary services. The council cannot use these powers to make a profit, however, the council can include the full cost of all aspects of the service provision when calculating the fee.</p>
Climate Change	None arising directly from the report.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	✓
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a ‘privacy impact assessment (PIA)’ is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

report author	telephone no.	email	date
Penny Jones, Corporate Accountant	01253 887298	Penny.jones@wyre.gov.uk	03/11/2023

List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection

None		
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List of appendices

Appendix 1 – 2024/25 Fees and Charges Schedule, applicable from 1 April 2024