



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Thursday, 26 October 2023

Subject: Proposed Fees and Charges 2024/2025

Report by:

Director of Corporate Services (Section 151
Officer)

Contact Officer:

Sue Leversedge
Business Support Team Leader

sue.leversedge@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

Propose Fees and Charges to take effect from 1
April 2024.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Members consider the proposed fees and charges for 2024/2025 as detailed and make recommendation to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

Where fees and charges are set by legislation at national statutory rates, these will be applied as notified.

Financial : FIN/86/24/PC/SL

The 2024/2025 fees and charges are explained in the body of this report. The budgetary implications of any amendments to fees and the forecast level of demand for each service will be built into the Council's revenue budget.

The Council is very aware of the level of inflation and the impact of this on those who will be paying fees and charges. Most of these charges have been previously approved and/or remain static, and the impact of proposed fee amendments alongside forecast demand mean a benefit to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) of £8.7k in 2024/2025, rising to £145.3k in 2028/2029.

Proposed levels of fees and charges for 2024/2025 are based on the Council recovering costs.

Where inflation increases have been applied to fees and charges 6% is proposed for 2024/2025. This is the lowest level possible which will enable the Council to cover significant increases in cost driven by the anticipated average pay award for 2023/2024 and RPI standing at 9.1%.

Inflation (RPI August 23) currently stands at 9.1%. It is proposed to apply the lower rate of 6% to reflect the impact of the proposed pay award on service provision (employee costs and officer time being the main cost driver for most of the proposed fees) whilst ensuring services remain accessible to all our residents given the current cost of living crisis.

Details of the proposed amendments in each service area are contained within the report at Section 4.

There are increases in fees and charges income budgets which have been, or are due to be, considered outside of this report. The services affected are:

- **Garden Waste Service** – subscription fee (approved by Prosperous Communities Committee 11.10.23)
- **Planning Applications** – statutory fees (was debated in the Lords Chamber 17.10.23. The instrument was approved, we are awaiting confirmation of the date of implementation)

The cumulative impact on the MTFP of the fees and charges review in relation to services within Prosperous Communities is:

Year	Cumulative (Increase) / Decrease in Contribution Including Pending Item £	Pending Item - Statutory Planning Fees £	Cumulative (Increase) / Decrease in Contribution less Pending Items £
2024/25	(174,200)	(165,500)	(8,700)
2025/26	(231,100)	(208,500)	(22,600)
2026/27	(231,600)	(192,200)	(39,400)
2027/28	(266,200)	(176,400)	(89,800)
2028/29	(355,100)	(209,800)	(145,300)

Where inflation was applied to the 2023/2024 fees an ongoing inflationary increase of 2% pa was applied from 2024/2025. If the decision were taken not to increase non-statutory fees as proposed within this report, there would be a pressure on the MTFP of around **£35k** pa from 2024/2025, and cost recovery for those services would not be achieved.

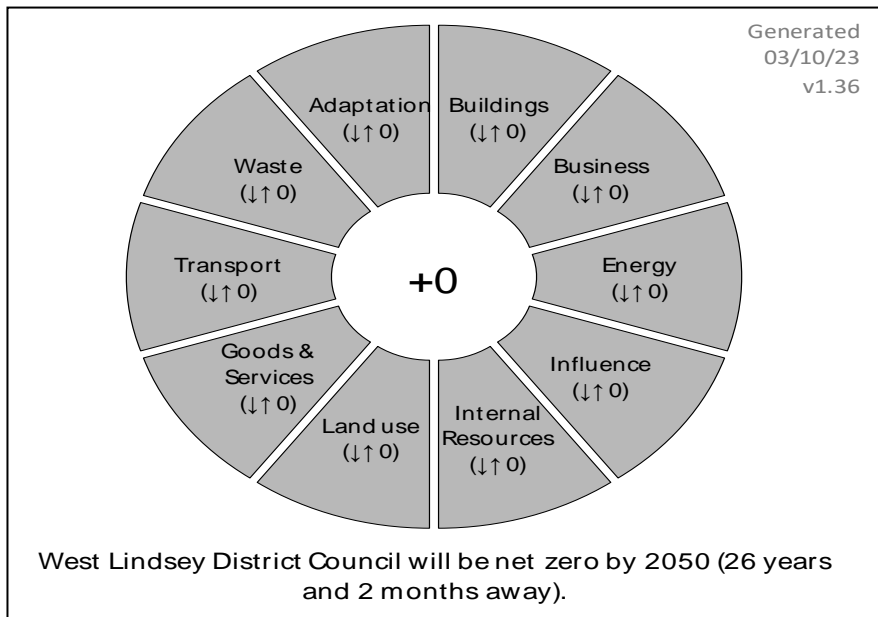
Fees and charges will be kept under review throughout the year. If necessary changes are identified during the financial year, these will be reported directly to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval as appropriate.

Staffing none arising because of this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: None arising as a result of this report.

Data Protection Implications: None arising as a result of this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :



Fees and charges assessments are departmental decisions governed by total cost recovery principals.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :

CCTV service charges are set to encourage take up of the service to increase public safety in the district and reduce anti-social behaviour.

Fixed Penalty Notices are fees set by the Government to enable Local Authorities to act against anti-social behaviour.

Health Implications:

Communities Service: Defibrillator Maintenance Scheme is in place to ensure the Automated External Defibrillators (AED's) are deployable and able to administer lifesaving support as and when needed across the district and is available to eligible organisations subject to scheme membership criteria.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

None.

Risk Assessment :

There is a risk that an increase in fees and charges may impact on the usage of the service resulting in budget pressures.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e., is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairperson)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

X

No

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report and appendices set out the proposed fees and charges for 2024/2025.
- 1.2 The Council has in place a corporate Fees, Charges and Concessions Policy which aims to provide clear guidance on several areas, in particular this focuses on how fees and charges can assist in the achievement of Corporate Objectives, the setting of new charges and reviewing of existing charges, the Council's approach to cost recovery and income generation from fees and charges and eligibility for concessions.
- 1.3 It is recognised that full cost recovery will be the customary approach, although this will not be appropriate in all circumstances and the amount charged will need to reflect many factors including Council objectives, market conditions, the cost of collection and the potential impact on customers.
- 1.4 Work has been undertaken to bring these fees and charges in line with this policy, through reviewing existing fees and charges and considering the introduction of new charges for Council services, to recover costs and control demand.
- 1.5 As a minimum, inflationary increases would normally have been applied where possible except for those fees set by statute. Where no increase is proposed this is to ensure that we maintain or increase market share whilst remaining comparable with benchmarking data.

2 Fees and Charges Policy and Process

- 2.1 The review of fees for 2024/2025 has been undertaken through a robust exercise including determining total service cost, determining a pricing level to ensure full cost recovery, then considering benchmarking data and market conditions to determine an appropriate charge.
- 2.2 Team Managers have worked with their Finance Business Partner in undertaking this review and consulted with the Assistant Director and or Director for each service area prior to submitting the final proposals for approval.
- 2.3 The review has in the main tried to consider the full cost recovery constraints. However, the process has been influenced to a degree by issues where the Council considers, through the benchmarking exercise, that the charge proposed is fair and reasonable for the service being provided.
- 2.4 The greatest risk/concern for Managers is receiving challenges to the level of fees and charges set. There is sound justification to support the proposed fees and, where the fees proposed do not reflect the full cost

of providing the service, there is a sound basis for the decision based on the Managers' understanding of the commercial environment.

- 2.5 Where fees have been reviewed, having a greater regard to benchmarking data where such data is available, we have tried to ensure that they are at a level whereby they do not vary substantially when compared to other local authorities in the surrounding area.
- 2.6 In areas where the Council experiences external competition, again we have tried to ensure that the rates remain competitive and value for money. It would not be prudent to risk pricing ourselves out of the market just to satisfy an aspiration to achieve a set increase in fee income. It is not believed that the proposed fees will price ourselves out of the market but it is vital to allow Managers some flexibility on fees when trying to secure business, without breaching any regulations.
- 2.7 Given the general belief that our proposed fees and charges are fair and reasonable the significant risks to fee income are not with fee levels themselves but with the achievable volumes and delivering against business plans.
- 2.8 The fees and charges will be subject to continuous monitoring during the year either to implement changes during the year if required, or to feed into the following years Medium Term Financial Plan.

3 Fees and Charges Review

- 3.1 Of the 637 fees and charges reviewed, 30% are statutory, 11% are a statutory range and 59% are non-statutory. In terms of 2023/2024 forecast outturn for income this equates to:

	2023/24 Forecast £	
Statutory / Statutory Range	1,749,631	38%
Non-Statutory	2,826,300	62%
Total	4,575,931	100%

Statutory / Statutory Range Fees

- 3.2 Of the 260 statutory fees and charges set by Central Government:
 - 86% have experienced no change in the level of fees,
 - 13% seeing an increase in fees chargeable, with the remaining 1% reflecting one fee decrease, and one new fee.
- 3.3 The increase in fees and charges for statutory services sit within:
 - Environment Services - Private Water Supply Work
 - Public Health Exhumation

- Health Act 2006
 - Planning - Public path orders
 - Licensing - Various licences to increase to no greater than the maximum fee
- 3.4 The new statutory fee is within the schedule:
- Licensing - Skin piercing-personal registration for conventions.

Non-Statutory

- 3.5 Of the 377 non-statutory fees and charges:
- 48% have experienced no change in the level of fees,
 - 51% have increased the fees chargeable, and
 - 1% have decreased the fees chargeable.
- 3.6 Of those 192 (51%) non-statutory fees and charges which have increased, this equates to an average of £17.01 in monetary terms (net of VAT), or 6.2% in terms of percentage increase applied.
- 3.7 The decrease in fees and charges for non-statutory services sits within:
- Licensing
 - Copy of Any License Not Covered by the Licensing Act 2003 or Gambling Act 2005.
 - Change of details, name and address.
Both reduced due to improved efficiency of the process.
- 3.8 The following services are currently provided with prices on application:
- Trinity Arts Centre (except room/theatre hire)
 - Trade waste services
 - Private street cleansing work
 - CCTV services

This is due to the variety of requirements of customers. Pricing models have been developed to assist officers in developing a price range, based on the individual requirements and specifications of the customer.

- 3.9 The following fees and charges are to be submitted to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval as part of the 'Budget and Treasury Monitoring – Quarter 2 2023/2024' report, to be applied in this financial year. They are included here for completeness and are subject to approval on the 9th of November 2023:

- **Crematorium:** Memorial Glass Offerings – Individual handmade ashes into glass ornaments containing a small amount of loved one’s ashes and comes with a certificate of authenticity
 - Robin ornament £115.00 (incl. VAT)
 - Memorial bauble with stand £145.00 (incl. VAT)
- 3.10 The proposed fees and charges will apply from 1st April 2024, unless there are other constraints preventing this, in which case the operative date will be as soon as practicable after 1st April.

The appendices provide the detail and analysis of pricing and demand and the proposed charges, and are summarised by service area below:

4. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES BY SERVICE AREA

The fees and charges schedules for Prosperous Communities committee are listed at **Appendix A and B*** (commercially sensitive*)

4.1 Appendix 1: Car Parks

- New Pay & Display (P&D) and permit tariffs were introduced for both Gainsborough and Market Rasen during 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, as part of the car parking strategy approved by Corporate Policy & Resources committee on 27th July 2017. It was decided that Market Rasen’s charges would be set at 50% of Gainsborough’s, to reflect the increased offer of the larger town.

A revised car parking strategy is due to be completed in 2025.

It is proposed that the pay and display tariffs for both Gainsborough and Market Rasen are left unchanged with effect from 1st April 2024.

For information, if the council were to increase the car parking tariffs the cost to do so would total circa £3k including legal fees, advertising, signage and a machine software update.

If there was a 3% or 10% rise in the pay and display tariffs for both Gainsborough and Market Rasen, based on demand staying the same, the Council would see an increase in income of £5k or £16.8k, respectively. Both options would cover the costs involved in the implementation of the increase.

- It is proposed that the Electric Vehicle Charging point fee is left unchanged with effect from 1st April 2024 at £0.55 per KWh, as this is in line with other operator charges (between £0.49 and £0.59).

- The bus stands are allocated/let as Primary and Secondary Stands with the Operators first stand being their Primary. It is recommended that bus stand fees are reviewed annually using the Retail Price Index figure produced by the Office of National Statistics.

There is an increase in income of £14k for this service in 2024/2025 to reflect anticipated demand.

4.2 Appendix 2: Cemeteries

Recent benchmarking shows the fees set for this service are now in alignment with neighbouring councils. The 2019/2020 approved increase above inflation was the final step towards the charges set by other councils.

With effect from 2024/2025, the proposal is to increase the fees by inflation at 6%, rounded to the nearest pound.

There is an increase in income of £0.1k for this service in 2024/2025.

4.3 Appendix 3: Environment Services

- This schedule consists mainly of statutory fees set at the maximum level. The charges for 2024/2025 are expected to be reviewed in February 2024. The schedule of charges will be updated to reflect any changes once known and reported to Committee.

All works undertaken are charged on a case-by-case basis, costed on the actual time taken up to a maximum charge that is set by statute. In the last 12 months the maximum fee set by statute has been sufficient to cover costs.

- Private Water Supply Work – a time cost analysis has been completed with the outcome being an increase above inflation at an average of 22.3%. This equates to an average increase of £10.02 in monetary terms.
- Of the remaining fees which are non-statutory, inflation at 6% increase has been proposed, rounded to the nearest pound, to bring them into line with benchmarking data.

There is no impact on the MTFP.

4.4 Appendix 4: Fixed Penalty Notices

The charging schedule sets out where fees are set by statute and where fees are set by the Council.

- Statutory charges will be applied in accordance with legislation, and there are no increases to the current fees.

- High hedge fee - inflation at 6% increase has been proposed, rounded to the nearest pound, to bring into line with benchmarking data.

There is no impact on the MTFP.

4.5 Appendix 5: Land Charges

The service has proposed an increase of inflation at 6% across most of the fees and charges within the service area, with the remainder being held at the current rates to maintain market share.

- CON290 fees provides answers to the property/land that only the Council hold information regarding. This can include recent statutory noise complaints or any road proposals and traffic schemes that affect the property.
- The LLC1 charge (Local Land Charge Register Search) has been removed from the charging schedule as the Land Registry have now taken over the declaration of registrations, as planned.

The budgets had previously been adjusted to account for this change, however the latest analysis of market share requires a further reduction of £1k in 2024/2025. As market share is projected to increase each year the income budget from 2025/2026 is forecast to rise accordingly i.e., an increase of £2.5k in 2025/2026.

There is a reduction in income of £1k for this service in 2024/2025.

4.6 Appendix 6: Licensing

Most of the charges are statutory, or a statutory range where there is discretion to charge up to a prescribed maximum amount.

There are 36 fees with a statutory maximum charge. WLDC have applied the maximum fee to 16 of those during 2024/2025. The remaining 20 have been increased by inflation.

Inflationary increase of 6% has been applied, rounded to the nearest pound, for all non-statutory fees that WLDC have the powers to set unless the statutory maximum has been reached. The proposed increases have been applied with a view to achieving total cost recovery, and to be consistent with charges being applied by neighbouring Authorities.

There is no impact on the MTFP.

4.7 Appendix 7: Markets

The Market was subject to a comprehensive review and future delivery options were to be considered by the Council's Prosperous Communities Committee earlier this year and an approved three-year Action Plan is now in delivery. A task-and-finish Member Markets Working Group has been established with a view to further developing the markets offer.

As the Action Plan is being implemented, we are not proposing any amendments to the existing fees and charges for the registered and casual traders.

To optimise the existing New Trader incentive on Saturday of £7.50 per stall for 6 months, it is recommended that the offer is extended to New Traders on a Tuesday Market and to the Farmers' Market for a fixed period of 6 months.

Additionally, to draw in the Young Market Traders (16 to 30 years old, as defined by the National Market Traders Federation) a fixed fee of £7.50 per stall is proposed. This would be applied to qualifying traders on a Tuesday, Saturday, and monthly Farmers' Market.

Market stallage fee income for 2022/2023 and the forecast for 2023/2024 is below £20k. It is proposed to reduce the base budget within the MTFP to this level pending the delivery of the Action Plan.

There is a reduction in income of £10k for this service in 2024/2025.

4.8 Appendix 8: Planning

- **Pre Application Advice**

The proposal is for the pre-application advice fees to be increased by inflation at 6% and rounded to the nearest pound.

There has been a continued focus on reducing overhead service costs through more efficient practices. Planning files are now digital / online, and measures are in place to reduce the demand for site visits.

- **Statutory Planning Fees**

Planning fees for England are set nationally by Government. The fees were last amended in January 2018, where a standard 20% increase across fees was introduced. This was the first update since November 2012.

The draft regulations propose to increase planning fees by 35% for applications for major development and 25% for all other planning applications.

They also propose to introduce an indexation mechanism so that planning fees are increased annually in line with inflation or, if lower, 10% from 1st April 2025. If there is deflation, the fee will not be adjusted.

The statutory instrument for 'Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2023' was debated in the Lords Chamber on 17th October 2023. The instrument was approved, and we are now awaiting confirmation of dates for when the increases come into force.

The amendment to statutory planning fees will result in an increase in income of £165.5k for this service in 2024/2025.

4.9 Appendix 9: Strategic Housing

It is proposed to apply inflation at 6% to the current years' fee, rounded up to the nearest pound.

There is no impact on the MTFP.

4.10 Appendix 10: Operational Services

- Garden Waste collections, including the proposed subscription fee for 2024/2025, was the subject of a separate report to this Committee on the 11th of October 2023. The proposed subscription fee increase from £39 to £44 was approved for recommendation to Corporate Policy and Resources committee.
- It is proposed to freeze the price of new and replacement bins. There has been no increase in the cost of bin stock in the past financial year.
- Inflation at 6% has been applied to additional blue sacks, rounded to the nearest 50p.
- It is proposed to freeze the current price for Bulky Waste services to ensure the service is accessible to all our residents given the current cost of living crisis. However, the income budget for bulky waste collections has been increased to £60k pa from 2024/2025 to reflect the forecast demand, based on actual income achieved during 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and the forecast for 2023/2024.
- Collection and disposal of fridges and freezers from commercial properties has been increased by inflation at 6%, rounded to the nearest £1.

There is an increase in income of £13.8k for this service in 2024/2025.

The amendment to the garden waste collection subscription fee provides an additional increase in income of £107.1k for this service in 2024/2025.

4.11 Appendix 11: Trinity Arts Centre

The fees and charges schedule for Trinity Arts Centre has been amended for 2024/2025 to better suit the patterns of hire schedules the venue has accommodated over the past year.

The new schedule is not directly comparable to the previous schedule. Both schedules are provided at **Appendix C** to allow for comparison.

All other fees & charges generated by the centre are Price on Application (POA) to assist officers in developing a price range, based on the individual requirements and specifications of the customer.

There is no impact on the MTFP.

4.12 Appendix 12: Crematorium

- Direct cremations maximise staff time and use of equipment that may otherwise not be used at less favourable times during the day. Direct Cremations play an important part of our service and running cost efficiency, to remain competitive we are proposing a 4.3% increase on this fee.
- Early start cremation service has been increased above inflation at 14.3% following a cost recovery exercise. This increases the service charge to £800 from £700. This is £110 less than our standard service which is proposed to rise by 5% to £910.
- Farewell service has been increased by 3% and Saturday service by 5%.
- Chapel extensions and Memorial services have been increased by 6% inflation.

These amendments to fees are being proposed to ensure we stay competitive with other Cremation providers and are based on a combination of cost recovery calculations and benchmarking data. This is especially important as we are still establishing ourselves in the market.

- Leased memorials have been increased by above inflation (average 11.4%) as the purchase costs have increased dramatically due to the increased shipping costs of granite.
- Chapel Tributes have been frozen or a below inflation increase has been applied to enhance our offer and encourage take up to widen our reach. If Obitus increase their charges we will do an additional request to Committee during the year to amend our charging schedule.
- To promote strewing/scattering of cremated remains into our Garden of Remembrance from another crematorium and potential memorial sales it is proposed to freeze our current fee. It is important to attract these

customers as we look to embed Lea Fields Crematorium in the local community, this could lead to families choosing Lea Fields for future services taking place at our crematorium and will also encourage memorial sales for loved ones scattered here.

- A 5-year forecast has been completed and we have seen a significant shift in the type of services preferred. The choice to have a direct cremation has increased significantly in the sector. This has been incorporated into our forecast income generation, resulting in an ongoing pressure against the standard cremations income budget.

There is a reduction in income of £115.3k for this service in 2024/2025.

4.13 Appendix 13: Communities: Defibrillator Maintenance Scheme

This service was introduced in September 2020, and membership has increased to a level where costs are forecast to be recovered by membership subscription fees.

Membership is currently at 73 customers and is expected to increase by a further 6 customers pa. Total cost recovery is achieved at 98 customers, which is forecast to be achieved by 2027/2028.

This is a service which is of significant benefit to the community. An increase of inflation at 6% is proposed for 2024/2025 to reflect officer time and an increase in cost of replacement parts for the defibrillators.

There is no impact on the MTFP, as income generated from the maintenance scheme will be used to purchase the required equipment.

4.14 Appendix 14: CCTV Service (Commercially Sensitive*)

Charges are Price on Application but analysis of income generation is provided within the Appendix for information.

4.15 Appendix 15: Building Control (Commercially Sensitive*)

Charges are based on a cost recovery basis but are considered commercially sensitive.

4.16 Appendix 16: Trade Waste (Commercially Sensitive*)

Charges are Price on Application but analysis of income generation is provided within the Appendix for information.

**The Proper Officer has determined in preparing Appendices 14, 15 & 16 that paragraph 3 should apply. The view of the public interest test was that while he was mindful of the need to ensure the transparency and accountability of public authority for decisions taken by them in relation to the spending of public money, disclosure of the information would give an unfair advantage to tenderers for commercial contracts.*

This information is not affected by any other statutory provision which requires the information to be publicly registered.

On that basis it was felt that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Members are asked to consider this factor when excluding the public from the meeting.