

Licensing and Planning Policy Committee
23 January 2025

FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

Head of Service:	Kevin Hanlon, Interim Chief Finance Officer
Report Author	Anna Clements, Senior Accountant
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Place Development Fees and Charges 2025/26 Appendix 2 – Licensing Fees and Charges 2025/26

Summary

This report recommends fees and charges for which this committee is responsible, with the new charges being effective from 1 April 2025.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Agree the fees and charges for 2025/26 as set out at Appendices 1 and 2.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To agree the fees and charges for the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee for 2025/26.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council will meet to agree the budget, including estimates of income and expenditure, on 11 February 2025. To enable the budget to be finalised, the policy committees are asked to recommend fees and charges covering the services for which they are responsible.
- 2.2 The current economic climate creates uncertainty and difficulties for budget setting. To this end, the budget guidelines agreed by Strategy and Resources in July 2024 included an overall increase in revenue discretionary fees and charges of 6%.

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- 2.3 The fees and charges presented in this report are discretionary charges only. For discretionary charges, there is scope to generate additional income, to reduce any subsidy of the service or to contribute to an improved budget position.
- 2.4 There are a number of charges set externally that the Council has no power to alter. This restricts the Council's ability to raise additional income and therefore the fees and charges set by statute are not presented to this Committee for approval.
- 2.5 When preparing budget estimates, fees and charges have been reviewed by service managers and any negative impact on demand anticipated by increased charges has been considered.
- 2.6 Members should refer to the revenue budget report on this agenda for an overview of the Committee's budget position.
- 2.7 In January 2018, to reflect changes to the Council's management structure, the Committee agreed that the Chief Finance Officer should have delegated authority to vary fees and charges for items generating income under £1,000 per annum. The Committee also agreed that this officer be permitted under delegated authority to set charges for one-off services or items not included in the fees and charges schedule.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 are set out at Appendices 1 and 2 to this report. The main variations in fees and charges for each service area outside the range of an increase between 6% and 10% are set out below:

Place Development

- 3.2 The budgeted income for 2024/25 and 2025/26 should be reduced by approximately £100k to take into account officer expectations of income generation for that period.
- 3.3 Consequently, the fees relating to pre-application advice and planning performance agreements have been held at the 2024/25 level for 2025/26 as these are discretionary services and increased fees could deter some applicants.
- 3.4 Planning application fees are set nationally and are expected to be increased by RPI from April 2025 onwards. These fees don't feature within this report as they are not discretionary, but it is anticipated that the increase should help the overall planning income position for 2025/26.

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- 3.5 Some Development Management services, such as Planning Performance Agreements, are bespoke and tailored to the specific development. A list of Officer hourly rates is therefore detailed in Appendix 1 to form the basis of the calculated fee. These fees have been increased for 2025/26 at approximately 6% in line with the uplift agreed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26.

Licensing

- 3.6 The majority of discretionary general licensing fees have been increased by approximately 6% for 2024/25.
- 3.7 In most regulatory areas, local authorities are restricted from generating profits on the service provided. Epsom & Ewell has seen a significant increase in taxi operators choosing to be licensed within the borough, therefore the increased business results in increased income to the Council.
- 3.8 To ensure the income generated by regulatory licensing does not significantly exceed the costs of delivering the service, the fees and charges for taxi licensing have remained unchanged for 2025/26, with the exception of the fees for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers and the Missed Appointment without reasonable notice fee which have increased respectively by 3%, 7% and 7.7%.
- 3.9 An additional fee for Hackney Carriage Vehicles (Hybrid/Electric Vehicle) has been introduced for 2025/26. The fee has been set at £265.00 and is lower than the Hackney Carriage Vehicles fee to promote positive environmental changes.
- 3.10 Additional fees have been introduced to make the renewal process more affordable for Scrap Metal Dealers Collectors Licence and Scrap Metal Dealers Site Licence, respectively at £350.00 and £410.00 which represent a reduction of 13.6% and 19.6% respectively compared to the licence fees for new operators.
- 3.11 New fees have been introduced for public performances, the new fees are the Permit for Public Performance of Hypnotism at £90.00 per permit, Classification of a Film at £50.00 per film and Additional per Minute of Film at £1.00. It is necessary for the Licensing Authority to determine film classifications for films being exhibited publicly and for where there is no British Board of Film Classification age rating.
- 3.12 To ensure that the Council is consistent with the requirements of Hemming v Westminster for licences to have a part A and part B fee, it is proposed the proportions be split as set out below:
- Part A – 66.6% of fee
 - Part B – 33.3% of fee

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- 3.13 The exemption to this is animal welfare licences which already have a defined Part A and B fee.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

4.1.1 Increased fees and charges could have a negative effect on take up for some service areas. Managers have been asked to apply realistic increases to avoid this.

4.1.2 The current economic crisis has resulted in some instances in reduced revenue from fees and charges.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4.5 Other

4.5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The impact of the proposed fees and charges for services in 2025/26 is set out below.

5.2 The table sets out the original additional income target as per the Medium Term Finance Strategy in the first column.

5.3 The second column presents additional income anticipated from the changes to tariffs proposed in the appendix to this report, on the assumption that current utilisation levels continue.

5.4 The third column shows changes to income budgets for fees and charges that are not related to changes to tariffs. Examples will be changes to customer numbers or where a new fee or charge has been introduced.

5.5 The last column sets out the difference between the budget target increase and the final income budget, which incorporates changes to both tariffs and volumes.

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	Target Increase in Income Budget (6%) £'000	Total Increase or (Decrease) due to changes to Tariffs £'000	Variations resulting from changes to volumes £'000	Variation between Target and total change £'000
Planning	8	0	8	0
Licensing	27	0	121	94
Total	34	0	129	94

- 5.1 The proposed charges will generate an additional estimated income of £129k. This has been taken into account in the budget to be presented to Council next month.
- 5.2 Overall, the effect of increased charges, combined with the anticipated change in volumes is that the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee income budgets are higher than the targeted budgeted income from fees and charges by £94k.
- 5.3 The additional income of £94k expected to be generated within Licensing will offset an additional £94k of anticipated expenditure. This expenditure consists of £20k in licence fees for new software which will enable online applications and improve the way licensing data is managed. The balance of £74k will fund staffing within the team to process the increased volumes.
- 5.4 The revised level of income has been included in the medium-term financial strategy to contribute towards a balanced budget over the next four years. A breakdown of the 2025/26 budget can be found in the budget report included on this agenda.
- 5.5 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific issues arising from this report, but the Council's resources will need to be applied to ensure that it fulfils its statutory obligations and delivers its policy on equalities.

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6.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council.

7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None for the purposes of this report.

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None for the purposes of this report.

7.5 **Partnerships:** None for the purposes of this report.

8 Background papers

8.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- [Budget Targets Report - October 2024.](#)

Other papers:

- [Revenue Budget 2025/26 report – January 2025.](#)