

Community and Wellbeing Committee  
16 January 2025

## FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

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| <b>Head of Service:</b>                         | Kevin Hanlon, Interim Chief Finance Officer    |
| <b>Report Author</b>                            | Richard Appiah-Ampofo, Senior Accountant       |
| <b>Wards affected:</b>                          | (All Wards);                                   |
| <b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>                 | No   |
| <b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b> | N/A  |
| <b>Appendices (attached):</b>                   | Appendix 1 – Fees and Charges Schedule 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 the Community and Wellbeing Committee for 2025/26.**
- (2) **Nominate and authorise the Head of Operational Services and Assistant Head of Service (Venues) to issue discounts on the new facility fee for group bookings of over 25.**

#### 1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To agree the fees and charges for the Community and Wellbeing 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, Policy Committees are asked to recommend fees and charges covering the services for which they are responsible.

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- 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%.
- 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 Appendix 1 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:

#### **Playhouse**

- 3.2 A new Facility Fee on ticket sales is being proposed to be added to the Fees and Charges for 2025/26.
- 3.3 Epsom Playhouse Theatre is 40 years old, and the infrastructure is the same as when it was originally built, this includes much of the technical Show lighting for performances. It has ongoing issues related to the end-of-life of equipment and will require necessary maintenance work to continue to deliver productions.
- 3.4 To mitigate the need for reactive repairs and the associated management concerns of the aging equipment, it is essential to implement a planned replacement programme especially for the technical equipment, followed by a comprehensive maintenance programme for the venue.

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- 3.5 Epsom Playhouse Theatre is committed to providing high-quality, diverse, and well-balanced entertainment to support the local community and enhance our reputation as a cultural destination. To support the ongoing operational costs of running the venue, which have significantly increased, we propose the introduction of a facility fee of £1.50 to each ticket sold from 1 April 2025, the income raised annual will be ringfenced for the playhouse upkeep.
- 3.6 Many theatres across the UK charge a facility fee or similar surcharge to cover maintenance and improvements. The £1.50 fee is below industry standards to ensure buy in on introducing the fee in April 2025 along with the continuation of high-quality experiences at Epsom Playhouse.
- 3.7 The advertised ticket price will indicate that a facility fee applies, and the £1.50 fee will be applied to all ticket purchases, whether made online, by phone, or in person at the box office.
- 3.8 It is proposed that Committee nominate and authorise the Head of Operational Services and Assistant Head of Service (Venues) to issue discounts on the new facility fee for group bookings of over 25.
- 3.9 The membership scheme at the Playhouse has seen some significant changes over the past 5 years and it has not actively been promoted since most productions (performances) no longer offer a membership discount price when they are touring; this was one of the main benefits we could offer members. With these changes we have seen a decline in the membership and therefore recommend ceasing the membership in its current format and officers will investigate a loyalty scheme in the future.

### **Bourne Hall**

- 3.10 Charges for the standard rate for art exhibitions have not been increased for 2025/26 to support community arts.

### **Community Services**

- 3.11 No increase is proposed to Shopping Services to ensure that the rates remain competitive.

### **Disabled Facility Grant Fees**

- 3.12 The Council has a statutory duty to operate a Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme, funded by Central Government. Over recent years this role has become more complex, with a broader remit than previously, involving multi agency working and a wide variety of assistance required by clients.
- 3.13 To reflect the officer time and general administration costs incurred as a result of this work, it was agreed in 2018/19 that the Council should charge fees to the fund. As these fees are on a cost recovery basis, no increases are proposed. The proposed fee structure for 2025/26 is as follows:

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- 3.14 Mandatory Grants: these are provided to enable adaptations to allow residents access to essential facilities within and around the home.

|   |                             |  |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Minimum fee charge  | £450                        | e.g. level access showers / stair lifts  |
| Works up to £30k  | 10%                         |  |
| Works in excess of £30k<br>Fees capped at maximum works the Policy permits the Council to fund    | 7.5%                        | e.g. ground floor extensions to provide downstairs wetroom/bathroom facilities   |
| Aborted works:<br>Pre-tender stage  | £450                        | Works may be aborted where an applicant's level of need has changed significantly since receipt of the original Occupational Therapist's report, or where the applicant has passed away. |
| Post-tender stage<br>depending on grant value<br>Limited at £60k (or higher as Policy determines) | 10%/7.5%<br>of 70% of works |  |

- 3.15 Discretionary Grants (funded through DFG allocation): for example, installation of galvanised (outdoor) handrails or measures to address thermal discomfort, e.g., replacement windows and heating.

|                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Minimum fee charge                | £300                        |
| All works                         | 10%                         |
| Aborted works<br>Pre-tender stage | £300                        |
| Post tender stage                 | 10% of 70% of cost of works |

- 3.16 Handyperson Grants: these are for small, odd jobs such as garden clearance and bathroom grab rails. No fee applied.

## 4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

### 4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1.1 An EIA screening assessment was conducted that noted that some of the fees and charges within this report relate to services provided predominately to older residents and could therefore be considered to impact people within the protected characteristics of age and disability.

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4.1.2 It was decided that an EQIA was not required because whilst the changes in fees and charges do impact people with those characteristics, the services provided are discretionary and therefore people can choose not to use them. Additionally, the fees have been increased in line with other discretionary services provided by the Council and therefore are not being treated unfairly. By not increasing fees to contribute to the cost of service delivery, other vulnerable groups could be impacted as funds are not available for those services, due to the subsidy created by charging lower fees.

### 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 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.

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

4.5.3 The new facility fee proposed at the Playhouse could discourage large bookings of some shows.

## 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.

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- 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.

|                    | Target Increase in Income Budget (6%)<br>£'000 | Total Increase or (Decrease) due to changes to Tariffs<br>£'000 | Variations resulting from changes to volumes<br>£'000 | Variation between Target and total change<br>£'000 |
|--------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Wellbeing Centre   | 10   | 0   | (90)  | (100)  |
| Community Services | 25   | 0   | (35)  | (60)   |
| Playhouse          | 30   | 10  | 20  | 0  |
| Bourne Hall        | 23   | 12  | 11  | 0  |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>88</b>                                      | <b>22</b>   | <b>(94)</b>   | <b>(160)</b>                                       |

- 5.6 The original target to increase fees and charges by 6%, if applied to all fees and charges, would have generated an additional £88,000. The increase in tariffs proposed will generate an estimated income of £22,000. Overall, the effect of increased tariffs, combined with the anticipated change in volumes is that Community & Wellbeing income budgets are lower than the targeted budgeted income from fees and charges by £160,000.
- 5.7 The S&R Committee in July 2024 approved a programme of service reviews including the community services offering and facilities at the Community & Wellbeing Centre. The Q2 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for 2024/25 considered by Audit & Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 14 November 2024 highlights a forecast under-recovery against the targets set by the budget estimates for 2024/25 at the Wellbeing Centre, and within Community Alarm and Meals at Home services.
- 5.8 Given the underachievement of income targets in these services, it is proposed to reduce the income budgets within these services to a more achievable level for 2025/26. The service review detailed in paragraph 5.7 will need to address this shortfall in income and recommend a way forward which enables the Council to reach a sustainable revenue budget position.

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- 5.9 The reduction in income of these services will create an additional budget pressure for 2025/26 of £160,000 and the reasons for the income budgets being unachievable are detailed below.
- 5.10 The dementia hub daycare has not managed to achieve the income expected from the initiative put forward by the Local Government Association and is projected to be £80,000 below the target set within medium-term financial savings in 2024/25. This initiative was put in place to reduce the subsidy of running the Wellbeing Centre. Officers believe that this idea has not grown as hoped and is partly due to the location has suffered with antisocial behaviour around the venue.
- 5.11 The meals at home service has not returned to the levels that were experienced in the lockdown where the target income is based, and therefore are showing £30,000 below the budget target set.
- 5.12 **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.
- 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.](#)

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**Other papers:**

- Revenue Budget 2025/26 report – on this agenda.