

Fees & Charges 2024/25	
Executive Summary	This report recommends the fees and charges for the financial year 2024-25 that will come into effect from the 1 st April 2024.
Options considered	Alternatives for the individual service fees and charges proposed have been considered by service managers as part of the process of creating this report.
Consultation(s)	Portfolio Holder Director of Resources/S151 Officer Budget Managers
Recommendations	That Cabinet agree and recommend to Full Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fees and charges from 1st April 2024 as included in Appendix A. • That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and relevant Directors/Assistant Director to agree the fees and charges not included within Appendix A as required (outlined within the report).
Reasons for recommendations	To approve the Council's proposed fees and charges for 2024/25.
Background papers	Fees & Charges 2023/24 report (Full Council – 12 th December 2022)

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Lucy Shires
Contact Officer	James Moore, Technical Accountant, James.Moore@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	This report helps to ensure that the Council is financially sound by setting charges for external services, adequately reimbursing the costs of delivering the Council's services and generating extra income where appropriate.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	This report includes opportunities that service managers have identified to generate extra income from within their current operations.
Council Policies & Strategies	N/A

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	Not an exempt item
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Current Fees & Charges 2023/24 report (Full Council – 22 February 2023)

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report recommends the fees and charges the Council issue for the financial year 2024-25 that will come into effect from the 1 April 2024 for the Cabinet to consider and then recommend to Full Council.
- 1.2 To also agree that delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and relevant Director/Assistant Director to agree the fees and charges not included within Appendix A as required.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1 The setting of the fees and charges for the next financial year forms part of the annual budget setting process. The reasons for presenting the fees and charges for approval ahead of the detailed budget report is to provide enough time for the service areas to make changes/issue notification letters to the public before the beginning of the new financial year.
- 2.2 This earlier setting also allows opportunity for income budgets to be updated and included in the new financial year's budget report, along with any forecasted impact in future year's budget projections.

3. Fees & Charges 2024/25

- 3.1 Fees and charges proposals for 2024/25 have been circulated by the Finance Team and reviewed by the leading budget manager so that income budgets can be updated as part of the annual budget setting process. The proposal is to increase fees and charges by 8% (rounded to the nearest 50p or £1) in line with inflationary costs as at the start of this income budget setting process. Appendix A to this report provides the detail of the proposed charges 2024/25 to come into effect from the 1st April 2024.
- 3.2 The proposed increases in fees and charges are due to one of the following reasons:
 - Inflationary increases which reflect the inflation increases in costs which the Council is facing.
 - Increases in fees and charges which are set by a higher authority (typically central government) for example, planning fees and election charges.

- Increases in fees which must be set on a cost recovery basis for example, land charges, building control and the majority of our locally set licencing fees.

3.3 **Elections**

These fees are Statutory and are set by central government. There have been no changes from the 2023/24 charges

3.4 **Communications**

These fees relate to filming costs when external bodies request the use of a Council asset (such as the Cromer Pier).

These have been reviewed and will be charged based on the size of the filming activity (number of cast/crew). An additional fee will be imposed if the operation requests exclusive use of a Council asset for the requested filming.

However, the fees given are only indicative as the Communications team reserve the right to individually assess the scale of any operation to determine that no cost will be incurred by the taxpayer for any private filming.

3.5 **Customer Services & ICT**

The Customer Services team only provide one direct service that comes with a cost to the application, Foreign Pension Verifications. This is a statutory service which the Council is required to provide, and has a government set fee of £10 per request to the customer.

In prior years, the Council has also processed concessionary fare applications (age-related travel pass). However, from 2024/25 this service will be administered only by Norfolk County Council.

The Council has provided external photocopying services to Parish Councils, Local Businesses, and not-for-profit organisations upon request. This service currently generates around £3,500 a year for the Council in addition to the reprographics normal functions.

These fees have been reviewed by the service manager to ensure that the Council is charging at a rate that brings income whilst keeping the service affordable for its customers, future expectations are for £4,000 to be earned instead yearly by the increased fees for 2024/25.

3.6 **Leisure**

The Holt Country Park team have sold firewood in the local area by advertising at the park/on social media whenever required forestry works have resulted in tree felling. Following a significant interest from the public in buying firewood during 2023/24, the charge has been increased by the recommended inflationary rate of 8% as this has been considered to still be an attractive offer. This fee is set by the Council at its own discretion and is anticipated to earn £1,500 in 2024/25.

School visit fees have also been increased by the rate of inflation to ensure that the service is charging appropriate costs. This service is more aimed at helping schools as opposed to generating a profit.

The Council facilities market open-air market days at Sheringham (Saturday's) and Cromer (Friday's) all year round, with an additional day on Wednesday's during the Spring/Summer months at Sheringham.

These fees are determined by the Council with the aim to charge a competitive rate to ensure the Council generates an income whilst attracting tourists to two popular areas in the district.

There is not yet a proposed increase for these charges for 2024/25, the service manager is currently undertaking a separate exercise to determine the most appropriate rates to charge for pitch fees, this will be brought to members at a later date.

3.7 **Legal**

The Council offers multiple legal services as outlined in Appendix A, a set fee is not declared for these services and customers are charged depending on the skill level of Solicitor requires to handle the case.

These charges are discretionary and are charged to match the salary cost of the officers handling the case. For example, if a difficult case requires a more senior officer, then a higher rate will be charged to the customer.

3.8 **Environmental Health**

Trade waste collection fees are not published in this report, this is because the full costs to the Council to deliver these services are not known in advance. To ensure that the service can operate in a financially effective manner, the setting of these fees is requested to be done separately under delegated powers by the Director of Resources/S151 officer once the service areas are more certain of future costs.

Waste collection services are a statutory service of the Council, and the fee is determined on a cost recovery basis and so has been increased by the rate of inflation to match the expected increase in costs.

Garden bin collection fees have been increased by the rate of inflation for 2024/25. This is a discretionary service that the Council does not have to provide but generates a good portion of income. By increasing these fees the Council is anticipating income of £1.327m for providing 23,700 garden bins across the District in 2024/25 which is an increased income of £152k.

Commercial services are a statutory function of the Council, the fee is determined on a cost recovery basis and so has been increased by the rate of inflation to match the expected increase in costs to provide the service.

Private water supply charges are a statutory function of the Council, the fee is determined on a cost recovery basis and so has been increased by the rate of inflation to match the expected increase in costs to provide the service. As noted on appendix A, laboratory costs are fully recovered where required.

Environmental Protection fees (Housing Act notices, HMO Licences, Fixed Penalty notices) are all statutory services that the Council must provide. The fees determined for 2023/24 are still deemed to be appropriate for 2023/24 and so no increase has been proposed. The only charges that have been increased by the rate of inflation are the contaminated land enquiry and temporary stopping place fees. This is because these services are delivered by Council Officers and so have been increased to ensure staff costs are recovered.

Licencing services are a statutory function of the Council, the fee is determined on a cost recovery basis and so all fees set at a District level have been increased by the rate of inflation to match the expected increase in costs to provide the service. Licencing fees relating to gambling/alcohol are set by Government legislation which has not changed from the 2023/24 fee setting process, therefore these charges remain the same.

A new policy is currently being undertaken by the licencing team for Street Trading Consents, once completed a new charge for the licences will be calculated and will be reviewed with members at a later date.

3.9 **Planning**

Planning services are a statutory function of the Council, the fees are determined at a national level by Government legislation. Consultations have been carried out during the last year by central government on increasing planning fees, but no definitive decision has been made.

3.10 **Estates**

The charge for dilapidation surveys has been increased, this is to reflect the cost more accurately in officer hours in carrying out these surveys as this service is lengthier than previously calculated.

Most of the Estate's charges were only introduced in 2023/24. Some of the services offered that have been more popular have had their charge increased by the rate of inflation. For those services that have not had much demand, these have been kept at the same fee to make the service more attractive to customers.

For chalets and beach huts, it has been determined that the current prices are still appropriate with the current level of demand. The winter season prices for Chalets have been increased as bookings for these have been increasingly popular.

A block booking has been introduced for beach huts to be hired over the winter period (end of September to end of May). The charge listed in appendix A is one single cost to hire a beach hut for this full period. There is a separate cost for booking during the Autumn period at Mundesley. It is hoped that introducing these winter options will generate extra income during a period when the huts are still able to be used. It is anticipated that beach huts/chalets will earn £25,000 more income in the 2024/25 year.

3.11 **Car Parks**

Car park charges have currently been left the same, these will be under review as part of a separate working group and proposed changes will be brought to members at a later date.

It has acknowledged that the seven-day car parking tickets can be used in any of the District's car parks once purchased. This however has led to some users purchasing a seven-day ticket at some of the cheaper tariff sites (Fakenham, North Walsham, Stalham) and then using these tickets at higher tariff sites. To resolve this, it is now proposed that all seven-day tickets are £34 across all sites as per the current tariff at most locations.

3.12 Please note, Council facilities operated by an external contractor are excluded from this report as the Council has no discretion on the setting of these fees.

4. **Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 Corporate Plan objectives are supported by the Council's allocated budgets, the Fees & Charges report will directly support the Council's budget setting 2024/25 report.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

Inflationary increases in fees and charges are required to meet the increased costs that the Council is facing. Without these increase the Council may have to consider making savings in service delivery to meet the shortfall in the Council's budget for 2024/25 and future years.

The S151 Officer (or member of the Finance team on their behalf) will complete this section.

6. Legal Implications

Any Fee described as Statutory is set at a higher than District government level, the Council does not have the power to impose a higher fee without breaking formal legislation.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section. They will outline any legal advice provided.

7. Risks

For demand led services, there is a risk that demand will fall, and the actual income received will fall short of the budgeted income. To mitigate this risk when producing income budgets assumptions will be made around the level of income to be achieved which will be based on the best estimates calculated by services managers and the finance team working together.

8. Net Zero Target

None as a direct consequence of this report.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

None as a direct consequence of this report.

10. Community Safety issues

None as a direct consequence of this report.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

This report makes recommendations for the fees and charges that will come into effect from the 1st April 2024. These are considered as part of the Council's service's income budgets that will be included within the details 2024/25 budget when it is presented for recommendation and approval.