

REPORT NUMBER      WSC 153/10

PRESENTED BY        COUNCILLOR K V KRAVIS, LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES  
& CENTRAL SUPPORT

DATE                    1 DECEMBER 2010

## FEES AND CHARGES 2011/12

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to propose levels of fees and charges for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 (in some cases fee increases will be implemented earlier, this will be stated in the relevant sections of the report)

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Cabinet are asked to approve the levels of fees and charges.
- 2.2. That Cabinet note that the **car park** fee proposals will go to Scrutiny Committee in December 2010 and Cabinet in January 2011, following discussion at the Corporate PAG on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

### 3. RISK ASSESSMENT

#### Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
Fees as set are open to challenge as the basis of charge is not defined <i>Fees are set in accordance with the Council approved policy</i>	Possible (2)	Major (3)	High (6)
The council fails to deliver the Medium-Term Financial Plan <i>Fees are set in accordance with the Council approved policy</i>	Possible (2)	Major (3)	High (6)

The scoring of the risks identified in the above table has been based on the scoring matrix below.

## Risk Scoring Matrix

<b>Likelihood (Probability)</b>	4	Almost Certain	Medium (4)	High (8)	High (12)	High (16)
	3	Likely	Medium (3)	Medium (6)	High (9)	High (12)
	2	Possible	Low (2)	Medium (4)	Medium (6)	High (8)
	1	Unlikely	Low (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)	Medium (4)
			1	2	3	4
			Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
<b>Impact (Consequences)</b>						

- Low risks do not require inclusion on a Risk Register.
- Risks that could adversely impact upon the achievement of two or more of the Council's priorities and that score 'medium' or 'high' on the risk scoring matrix should be classified as Corporate Strategic Risks, and entered on the register.
- Service-specific risks that score 'medium' or 'high' must be included in the service group risk register, which should be incorporated in the relevant service plan.

#### **4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**4.1.** Council (24<sup>th</sup> July) approved a Fees and Charges Policy, which governs the setting of all fees and charges by the council for the next 3 years. Fee-setting requires a framework (as identified in the policy) to ensure that reasonable information is taken into consideration when agreeing the level of charges, concessions and acceptability of charges to service users.

**4.2.** Attached at **Appendix A** is a summary of the sources of fee income generated by the council. In accordance with the policy, this summary shows the considerations applied to each type of fee, notably if it is –

- a statutory fee that the council cannot control
- a discretionary fee that is levied to influence behaviour or recover service costs, or
- a reasonable charge designed to help discharge a council's responsibility

**Appendix A** also considers other aspects of the fees policy –

- concessions for some service users
- ability to generate surpluses to fund service maintenance or growth, and
- the need to consult with service users over price amendments

**4.3.** Attached at **Appendix B** is a summary of all fees, current levels and proposed increases

The following is a summary of the proposals for fee increases for 2011-12. Other fees are not being amended.

<b>Charging Area</b>	<b>2010/11 Arrangements</b>	<b>2011/12 Proposals</b>
Harbour Moorings	Various charges as App B	Fees increased by 50%
Car Parking Charges	To follow in January (Cabinet)	
Building Control Fees	Various charges as App B	Amend in accordance with Charging Regulations 2010
Recharging election costs	No charge	Recharge parishes and towns for share of costs
Private Water Supply samples	Equitable charge based on hourly rate	Charge exemplified

### **Licence fees and harbour moorings**

Licences for animal establishments, hackney carriages, various shops and street trading are currently comparable with neighbouring Districts. The current fees are shown in **Appendix B**. No increases are proposed.

There is a waiting lists for harbour moorings at Minehead, suggesting demand for this service. A review of similar charges at North Devon supports an increase in the fees to further recover the cost of the service (there is an effective subsidy from taxpayers), as shown in the table above, from **April 2011**.

### **Gambling Act premises**

There are upper ceilings for these charges, as set in statute. No increases are proposed.

### **Car Park Charges**

Proposals for changes to car park fees are passing through the Corporate Policy Advisory Group (PAG) process, and will be referred to Scrutiny Committee prior for comment before Cabinet receive proposals in January 2011. There will be opportunities for all councillors to feed into this process.

### **Building Control fees**

In accordance with legislative changes in July 2010, the council is amending its building control fees. The overarching principles of the new charging system are full cost recovery and that users only pay for the service they receive. These amended fees will take effect from the date of approval of this report.

A summary of the new scheme including definitions is attached at **Appendix C**. The charges currently mirror those set by Taunton Deane Borough Council and Sedgemoor District Council and will take **immediate effect**.

### **Local Land Charges**

There is some risk around the access to information available via a land search, such that the council may not be able to charge for this under Freedom of Information rules. Meantime, Somerset district councils have worked together to identify a reduced fee level that could be initially set pending clarification of the law. This reduced personal search fee is identified in **Appendix B** and will take effect from **1 January 2011**. Further work is proposed to ensure that remaining fees are optimised.

### **Green Waste and Bulky Waste Charges**

The Waste Partnership board have proposed that green waste charges be increased from £40 to £42.50 per year.

For Green Waste, experience at other authorities has shown that increases above £40 have diminishing returns of income, such that customers cancel their arrangements. For this reason the Cabinet are requested to maintain a charge of £40.

The Somerset Waste Partnership operates a bulky waste collection service for household items. The charge is £35 for up to 3 items and £7.50 per item (maximum 5 per visit) above that. Bulky waste charges will also remain as last year.

### **Recharging Parish Councils for Elections**

West Somerset is the only district in Somerset that does not seek a contribution from its parishes towards the cost of running elections. A charging system is proposed for the May 2011 elections that will invoice parishes for their share of hall costs, ballot papers etc. (that are directly attributable to the parish or town council elections). A letter has been sent to all parish clerks to advise them of this possible cost and they should consider an additional precept accordingly. The charge will be between £1,000 and £3,000 depending on the size of the parish and apply from the **May 2011** elections.

### **Private Water Supply sampling**

Ministerial review has prompted all local authorities to produce a policy and procedural notes in relation to collection, processing and reporting of private water supplies, of which there are a number within West Somerset due to the rural nature of the Authority's area.

Charges are identified in **Appendix B** and will apply from **1 January 2011**. A copy of the policy is available on request.

## **5. FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. Fees and charges that the council generates contribute to the overall costs of running the organisation, and help to maintain low tax rises. Overall, the level of fees and charges set in 2010/11 is budgeted to contribute approximately £1.5m towards revenue income.

## **6. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS**

- 6.1. The fees are set according to the policy approved by Council in July 2010. That policy is designed to last a number of years to assist officers and members in approving future fee changes. The framework identified by the policy ensures that decisions are made in the light of all information available, to ensure that councillors can be satisfied and stand by their decisions.

## **7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. Proposals for amendments to car parking charges will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

## **8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

None in respect of this report.

## **9. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. All parish and town councils affected by introduction of new charges will be consulted before the end of the calendar year and the results of consultation fed into the January report to Scrutiny on the budget for 2011/12.

## **10. ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

None in respect of this report.

## **11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

None in respect of this report.

**12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1.** Building Control fees and Water Sampling charges are set in accordance with relevant guidance.

**REPORT TO THE CABINET MEETING TO BE HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2010.**

**CONTACT OFFICER:  
TEL. NO.DIRECT LINE:  
EMAIL:**

GRAHAM CARNE, SECTION 151 OFFICER  
01984 635253  
GCARNE@WESTSOMERSET.GOV.UK