

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
3rd March, 2017

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Albiston, Clark, Mallinder, Sansome, Short, Walsh and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Allcock, Cowles, Price and Julie Turner.

107. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report at this meeting.

108. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th February, 2017 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

109. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

110. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT FEES AND CHARGES

Consideration was given to the report which set out the proposed fees and charges for the Regeneration and Environment Directorate for 2017/18 and beyond.

The proposed fees and charges were reflected in the budget savings proposals included in the Council's Budget and Council Tax setting report, which were subject to approval by Council on the 8th March 2017.

The charges for each service within Regeneration and Environment were presented in Appendices 1 – 9. Where no increases were proposed to charges in 2017/18, charges would remain at the amounts approved by Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting on the 14th March, 2016. Within the proposed fees and charges, the following changes were specifically highlighted:-

- **Planning and Building Control Service** – proposals to introduce a new charge for property addressing.
- **Leisure and Green Spaces** - Fees and charges have been reviewed in the context of the known demand for individual services. As a result, a number of charges have been held at existing levels and others have been increased by at least the rate of inflation. Charges are applied for the 2017/18 financial year; however, there are several exceptions to this:-

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- Charges for Wedding Packages in Clifton Park for 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- Car parking tariff at Clifton Park for over 3 hours during the summer and for the remainder of the year have been increased to reflect demand for this service.
- Allotment rents giving tenants twelve months' notice of any increase.
- **Building Regulation Charges** – Building Control Application Fees have been reviewed and were proposed to be increased for the first time since April 2014.
- **Market Service and Borough Fairs Charges** – Market Service charges have been, but it was recommended that rents for the Centenary Market Hall remain frozen for 2017, to ensure that the Market Service remains competitive and attractive to new businesses. However, an increase of £2.10 (10.6%) for Tuesday Street Market Casual Traders was proposed, to reflect the popularity of this market. In addition, in respect of Borough Fairs Charges, Appendix 4b, a 5% increase was proposed, to reflect the fact that charges have been frozen in recent years.
- **Community Protection Charges** – Changes to the Housing Licensing fee structure were made in 2016/17. With the exception of charges for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), which would increase by 1% to reflect salary cost increases, it was not proposed to increase any of the other charges in this area.

Consultation Fees would be at the appropriate hourly rate for the officer carrying out the work.

- **Library, Customer Services, Theatre Services and Heritage Services** - Heritage Services' charges would largely remain static in order to improve take-up of these services.

Registration Services were able to set fees on a cost recovery only basis, for any non-statutory services they delivered and an increase was proposed from 1st April 2017.

No changes to fees and charges proposed for Library and Customer Services.

Theatre Services' fees and charges applied to theatre hire, equipment hire, specialist additional staffing support and ticketing, but negotiation of professional contracts would continue, with a £1 ticket fee for professional show bookings, to recover administration costs.

- **Commercial Waste Charges** – Proposed to increase commercial waste charges by 2.5%.

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- **Business Regulation Charges** - Proposed that the fees for 2017/18 were increased in line with the 1% increase in staffing costs across the service.
- **Pest Control Fees** – The proposed fees have been set and were across a range of pest control.

It was suggested that officers be given flexibility on prices charged in respect of areas of commercial activity, to allow the Council to retain and attract business, where necessary, and include promotional discounts and negotiate individual charges to meet the needs of the business.

It was also noted there were no proposals to increase fees and charges for Highways Services, Parking Services, Licensing and for the hiring of directly managed community buildings. A review of these charges would be undertaken in 2017/18 and proposals for 2018/19 brought forward in due course.

Further information Was also provided on the process should an application be received to temporarily close a road under the Traffic Regulations Act for a public event, the support provided and the circumstances when the management fee was charged.

Resolved:- That the report be received, the contents noted and the report progress to the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting for approval:-

(a) Of:-

- Proposed fees and charges for the Planning and Building Control Service as set out in Appendix 1.
- Proposed fees and charges for Leisure and Green Spaces as set out in Appendix 2.
- Proposed Building Regulation charges as set out in Appendix 3.
- Proposed Market Service and Borough Fairs Charges as set out in Appendix 4.
- Proposed Community Protection charges as set out in Appendix 5.
- Proposed Library, Customer Services, Theatre Services and Heritage Service charges as set out in Appendix 6.
- Proposed Commercial Waste charges as set out in Appendix 7.
- Proposed Business Regulation charges as set out in Appendix 8.
- Proposed Pest Control charges as set out in Appendix 9

(b) That, subject to the approval of the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment or the appropriate Assistant Director within Regeneration and Environment, officers be given flexibility on prices charged in respect of areas of commercial activity, to allow the Council to retain and attract business where necessary.

(c) That, subject to the approval of the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment or the appropriate Assistant Director within Regeneration and Environment, officers be given flexibility to introduce promotional discounts and negotiate individual charges to meet the needs of the business.

111. FINANCIAL INCLUSION PLAN FOR ROTHERHAM COUNCIL TENANTS

Consideration was given to the report which sought authority to approve the Financial Inclusion Plan for Council tenants.

This plan aimed to remove barriers and support people to become more independent and to take control of their own finances. Evidence indicated that improving financial capability and confidence would contribute to reducing poverty, improving health and educational attainment as well as increasing skills and employability.

The plan would not stand alone to deliver solutions, but recognised that a co-ordinated approach that brought Council services, partners and agencies together would be more cost effective and achieve greater success in providing tenants and residents with the support required to enable them to access the benefits basic financial services could provide.

The aim was to help Council tenants improve their quality of life by reducing debts, reliance on high interest cost lenders and increasing levels of educational attainment; which would improve overall skills and job prospects, as well as increasing independence and build resilience longer term. The plan would be implemented by housing staff in the remodelled Housing Income Team and Council Housing Allocation Officers.

Following further development of the corporate approach to tackling poverty it was intended to learn from implementation of the tenants Financial Inclusion Plan and where appropriate align resources and offer services irrespective of tenure.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Invest to Save had been utilised to transform the Financial Inclusion Team and was looking to reduce the debt through the process. There was a series of Performance Measures which would be reviewed as the new Team structure was implemented;
- Development of the methods of support for tenants was underway; some tenants may not want to attend a workshop and may need individual support to understand the implications of taking on a tenancy;

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- Funding through the Housing Revenue Account and had Officers working in Children’s Services to assist when families were in difficulties to assist in sustaining their tenancies;
- It was essential that new elements of the Housing Income Team were connected to the Allocations and Housing Management Teams and ensure that Officers worked together for the benefit of tenants to sustain tenancies and to ensure they were in suitable accommodation;
- The Council was aware that some of its tenants were struggling to pay their basic household bills and some of the work required as part of the financial inclusion work included helping tenants get into work through training programmes, signposting and connectivity to appropriate training and skills;
- There were more people on zero hours contract; many people who were “poor” but were actually in employment and using food banks so the Strategy had to be more creative. It was known that some of the workforce was working at the minimum wage which did not match up to the cost of inflation, food costs etc. Part of the role of the Community Catalyst from the Adult Social Care perspective was to look at micro enterprises as well as the lobbying taking place nationally with regard to people with learning disabilities who wanted to be in work but not being paid the minimum wage;
- There were currently 6,000 people on the Council’s housing waiting list;
- Rotherham did not have a significant increase in homelessness on the street. South Yorkshire had recently been successful in securing resources for additional workers to work with those citizens in danger of becoming homeless.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received, the contents noted and the report progress to the Cabinet and Commissioners’ Decision Making Meeting for approval of the Financial Inclusion Plan for Housing for the period 2017 to 2020.

(2) That the Equality Impact Assessment be completed and monitored by the Improving Places Select Commission in six months.

112. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Friday, 17th March, 2017, at 9.00 a.m.