
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2018

BTSP.82/18 BUDGET 2019/20 – 2023/24

(c) Review of Charges

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources presented the Review of Charges reports informing the Panel that there was a 3% increase on the overall level of income in line with the Corporate Charging Policy.

Community Services

Report CS.31/18 was submitted setting out the proposed fees and charges for 2019/20 relating to those services falling within the Community Services Directorate.

The charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated income level of £3,036,900 against the MTFP target of £3,054,100 which represented a shortfall of £17,200 against the MTFP target.

The Executive had on 12 November 2018 (EX.100/18) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive:

1. Had reviewed the proposed charges as set out in the body of Report CS.31/18 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2019, noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.
2. Made the report of proposed charges available to relevant Scrutiny Panels for their review and comment”.

In accordance with the Panel's resolution BTSP.75/18, the Deputy Chief Executive also submitted report CS.36/18 which highlighted exceptions and major changes to the charges services levied by the Community Services Directorate. The report had no new charges and all increases complied with the agreed Corporate Charging Policy.

The report detailed a proposal that the City Council made a small charge for the supply and replacement of boxes and bags for recycling. The charges were to encourage residents to look after their boxes/bags and support recycling by offering reduced costs. In addition the most significant increase was the charge for stray dogs. The charge reflected the increased cost of the service.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- There was concern that the proposed increases to the stray dog charges were high for dog owners who had chipped and collared their animal. Members understood the need for increased charges, especially for repeat incidents but felt that a two tier structure should be used, dogs that were chipped and collared would be cheaper than those which were not and repeat incidents were then higher for both.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder acknowledged the suggestion and informed the Panel that the charges reflected the increased cost of the service following a retender process and appointment of a new contractor. The kenneling service and out of hour's collection costs had increased and the cost would be passed on to the owner of the dog.

- A Member commented that there were no equality and diversity impact assessments within the budget documents which set out the impact of changes the Council was making, this was especially important with regard to charges reports.
- The Panel noted that it was proposed that the extended hours charging policy in the Sands Centre car park be removed during the development period and that the charges would be reconsidered following completion of the development.
- It was felt that there should not be any discretion when applying the charge for the delivery of recycling containers; if the charge was introduced the policy should be tighter than discretion on individual cases.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder agreed there should be consistency and he would look again at the cost effectiveness of the proposed charge.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review reports 2019/20 – Community Services (CS.31/18 and CS.36/18) be received.

2) That the Panel recommend to the Executive that the Stray Dog charges are altered to have a two tier system. Charges would be lower for dogs which were chipped and collared than for dogs without.

3) That equality and diversity impact assessments should be included in the budget documents, particularly with the charges reports.

Economic Development

Report ED.37/18 was submitted setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic Development Directorate.

The proposed charges in relation to Planning Services included Development Control income; Building Control income; and Local Plan income.

Acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report, with the exception of Building Control which was self-financing, would result in an anticipated level of income of £626,200 against the Medium Term Financial Plan target of £728,000.

The Executive had on 12 November 2018 (EX.101/18) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges, as set out in Report ED.37/18 and accompanying Appendices, with effect from 1 April 2019; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.”

In accordance with the Panel's resolution BTSP.75/18, the Corporate Director of Economic Development also submitted report ED.41/18 which highlighted exceptions and major changes to the charges services levied by the Economic Development Directorate. The report had no new charges and all increases complied with the agreed Corporate Charging Policy.

RESOLVED – 1) That Charges Review reports 2019/20 – Economic Development (ED.37/18 and ED.41/18) be received.

Governance and Regulatory Services

Report GD.72/18 was submitted concerning the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Governance and Regulatory Services Directorate.

The report set out the proposed charges relative to Environmental Health and Housing; Homeless, Prevention and Accommodation Services; and Legal Services. The introduction of the proposed charges was forecast to generate income of £874,000 in 2019/20 as summarised in the table at Section 5.10 of the report.

The Executive had on 12 November 2018 (EX.102/18) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges as detailed within Report GD.72/18 and accompanying Appendices, with effect from 1 April 2019; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.”

In accordance with the Panel's resolution BTSP.75/18, the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory services also submitted report GD.88/18 which highlighted exceptions and major changes to the charges services levied by the Governance and Regulatory Services Directorate.

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services reported that there were no new charges and all increases complied with the agreed Corporate Charging Policy. He added that the most significant change was the transfer of the Official Search element of the Local land Charges search. The function, due to a change in the law, would transfer from the City Council to the Land Registry during 2019. Accordingly, the Council's income would reduce by an estimated £29,000 during 2019/20.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Did the move of part of the local land search function to the Land Registry result in any staff implications?

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services explained that there was one permanent member of staff and one casual member of staff. As some of the search would remain at the Council, the permanent member of staff would be unaffected, it may however, mean there was no longer work for the casual member of staff.

- Were the immigration checks on properties carried out in house?

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services confirmed that the Private Sector Housing Team, within Environmental Services, carried out the inspections at the point of application. Further inspections would be part of the Council's role to ensure that houses within the District were fit for purpose.

- The Private Water inspection charges were subject to a review following recent changes to legislation, when would they be finalised?

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services responded that the charges were subject to legislation and the charges would be brought to the Panel if and when the law changed.

RESOLVED – That the Review of Charges 2019/20 reports – Governance and Regulatory Services (GD.72/18 and GD.88/18) be received.

Governance and Regulatory Services - Licensing

Report GD.87/18 was submitted setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Licensing Section of the Governance and Regulatory Services Directorate. The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services advised Members that the Regulatory Panel had responsibility for determining the licence fees, with the exception of those under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, which fell to the Executive.

The Executive had on 12 November 2018 (EX.103/18) received the report and agreed:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the charges which were considered by the Regulatory Panel on 17 October 2018.
2. Noted that the fees under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 had been determined by the Executive for a three year period on 1 August 2016.”

A Member noted that the City Council had strong and proactive enforcement within the licensing section and hoped that the enforcement of the sale of dogs would be taken as seriously.

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services assured Members that the Environmental Services Team would take the enforcement of the illegal sale of dogs very seriously.

RESOLVED – That the Governance and Regulatory Services - Licensing Review of Charges 2019/20 report (GD.87/18) be received.