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**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE  
COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2013**

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**COSP.76/13 BUDGET 2014/15**

**(c) Review of Charges 2014/2015**

- **Local Environment**

Report LE.30/13 was submitted, setting out the proposed fees and charges for the services falling within the remit of the Local Environment Directorate.

With regard to the City Centre Events and in view of the current economic climate, it was proposed to retain the current charge levels for 2014/15 as set out in Option 1, Table 1 to help maintain demand and the current budgeted level of revenue.

A new charging structure for car parks had been introduced in March 2012 under which car parks were grouped into four categories to reflect the varying demand from users for each car park. No increases in charges had been made since that time, and the existing charges for each category of car park; together with proposed amendments to special event charges to reflect the daily charge for parking; and car park ticket sales were set out at Section 3.2 of the report.

The revised charging structure also included the introduction of Pay by Phone facilities. Table 3a showed that such measures had not prevented a continuing decline in Pay and Display ticket sales, although the introduction of Pay by Phone had helped. The ticket sales from car parks had declined by an average of 11% over the last 2 years.

Although the uptake of Pay by Phone increased every month, it still only represented a minor element of ticket sales and income. For many shoppers, who were uncertain how long they may wish to stay, the use of Pay by Phone provided an opportunity to extend the parking duration without the inconvenience of having to return to the car as extended duration could easily be purchased. Officers in conjunction with local businesses planned to make users more aware of the advantages of that option in the hope that sales could be increased and that businesses benefitted from the flexibility that the option offered their customers.

The report also provided details of the existing Contract Parking Permit (Saver Parking Permits) charges and, as there were no proposals to change the standard parking charges, it was proposed that the contract parking charges remain unchanged.

It was further proposed to introduce a new charge of £6.00 per day for Builders Permits into the car parking scheme.

The summary of the car park ticket income over the last 2 years for the first 6 months of each year showed that the situation was more optimistic than with ticket sales. Overall income had increased by 1.2% in the past 12 months but still showed an overall fall of 6.3% over the last 2 years. If that improvement was sustained it may indicate the start of an upward trend. The economic situation had not yet shown much improvement and there was evidence to suggest that increasing charges would trigger a fall in car park usage. It was therefore proposed that charges remain unchanged for another year as set out in Table 2, at which time data would be available on whether the recovery in income had accelerated making an increase in charges more justifiable.

Three options for proposed increases in charges for football and rugby pitches, which were substantially in accordance with the MTFP target, were detailed at Tables 6, 7 and 8 – Option 2 being the Officer recommendation.

Details of the proposed charges in relation to Allotments; use of Parks and Green Spaces; Play Area Inspection Fee; Talkin Tarn Car Parking / Other Charges; Bereavement Services; and Environmental Health were also provided.

With the exception of Talkin Tarn, the income from which was ring-fenced, acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated level of income of £2,415,000 against the Medium Term Financial Plan target of £2,539,000. That represented a shortfall of £178,000 against the MTFP target.

The Executive had on 18 November 2013 (EX.129/13) considered the report and agreed for consultation the charges as set out in Report LE.30/13 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2014; noting the impact of those charges on income generation, as detailed within the report.

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

- *There were three options in respect of sports pitch provision. Options two and three would put a huge burden on parents who may have two or more children attending a sports club.*

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Council subsidised sports clubs prior to those options being tabled and discussed with the Executive.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder confirmed that the options would be looked at further.

The Director of Resources explained that the proposed increase outlined in option 1 was in line with the 3.8% increase across the board.

- *With regard to City Centre events Members agreed that charges for large commercial promotions should be doubled. How much did small and medium commercial promotions use the city centre?*
- *Was there any discretion on charges during the large markets for organisations such as Made in Cumbria?*

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder explained that all events go to the events group and the City Centre events were handled by the events team. The Council wished to have all events managed by one group. The Executive wanted local markets but events had to be rationalised and the charges looked at.

- *The Council would have to be careful that trade was not being taken from the covered market which was a concern particularly during Continental market weeks. Local businesses were important.*

In response to a query the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the minimum Play Area Inspection fee was £50. The Council acknowledged that Parish Council reserves were stretched and the fee was not designed to generate income. The burden of play area inspections was shared with Parish Councils but the Council was mindful of costs.

RESOLVED – That the observations of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as outlined above, be conveyed to the Executive

- **Community Engagement**

Report CD.53/13 was submitted setting out the proposed fees and charges for the Hostel services and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) falling within the responsibility of the Community Engagement Directorate.

The report gave an overview of the current position with regard to the provision of housing related support within the Hostel Services and outlined proposed charges for 2014/15. Pending Executive approval for the revised rent charges, it was prudent to flag up a projected £30,000 deficit on the proposed 2014/15 revenue budget for the Hostels. A further review of hostel expenditure would be undertaken to bridge the shortfall and ensure that expenditure was in line with the budget.

The report outlined details of the proposed DFG fees for 2014/15, highlighting the need to review the MTFP for DFGs to accurately reflect the income as part of a review in 2013/14.

The introduction of the hostel charges and DFG proposed fee charges were forecast to generate income of £516,500 and £123,800.

The Executive had on 18 November 2013 (EX.130/13) considered the report and agreed for consultation the increase in charges, as set out in Report CD.53/13, with effect from 1 April 2014; and noted the impact thereof on income generation as detailed within the report.

The Director of Resources agreed to look at the apparent discrepancy in income from hostels within the report. Income from hostels was picked up by Housing Benefits which was monitored by the Director of Resources. Some hostels were not as full as expected in 2013/14 and there was a shortfall in income. It would be possible in the final charging period to include present charges within the table.

RESOLVED – That report CD.53/13 be noted.

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**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2013**

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**EEOSP.79/13 BUDGET 2014-15 TO 2018-19**

**(c) Review of Charges 2014/15**

Report LE.30/13 was submitted, setting out the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15 relative to the services falling within the responsibility of the Local Environment Directorate.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.129/13), decided:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges as set out in Report LE.30/13 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2014; noting the impact of those charges on income generation, as detailed within the report.”

- **City Centre Events Charges**

In view of the current economic climate, it was proposed to retain the current charge levels for 2014/15 as set out in Option 1, Table 1 to help maintain demand and the current budgeted level of revenue. Based upon anticipated usage, the proposed charges in Table 1 for 2014/15 would still meet the MTFP budget target requirement of £26,200. The charges had not increased since 2009 and the Executive may wish to consider increasing the charges as set out in Option 2, which introduced 3 categories of promotion (small promotions consisting of one vehicle or canopy; medium promotions consisting of 2 vehicles, canopies; large promotions were vehicles over 7.5 tons or multiple vehicles/canopies.

- **Car Parking**

A new charging structure for car parks had been introduced in March 2012 under which car parks were grouped into four categories to reflect the varying demand from users for each car park. No increases in charges had been made since that time, and the existing charges for each category of car park; together with proposed amendments to special event charges to reflect the daily charge for parking; and car park ticket sales were set out at Section 3.2 of the report.

The revised charging structure also included the introduction of Pay by Phone facilities. Table 3a showed that such measures had not prevented a continuing decline in Pay and Display ticket sales, although the introduction of Pay by Phone had helped. The ticket sales from car parks had declined by an average of 11% over the last 2 years.

Although the uptake of Pay by Phone increased every month, it still only represented a minor element of ticket sales and income. For many shoppers, who were uncertain how long they may wish to stay, the use of Pay by Phone provided an opportunity to extend the parking duration without the inconvenience of having to return to the car as extended duration could easily be purchased. Officers in conjunction with local businesses planned to make users more aware of the advantages of that option in the hope that sales could be increased and that businesses benefitted from the flexibility that the option offered their customers.

The report also provided details of the existing Contract Parking Permit (Saver Parking Permits) charges and, as there were no proposals to change the standard parking charges, it was proposed that the contract parking charges remain unchanged.

It was further proposed to introduce a new charge of £6.00 per day for Builders Permits into the car parking scheme.

The summary of the car park ticket income over the last 2 years for the first 6 months of each year showed that the situation was more optimistic than with ticket sales. Overall income had increased by 1.2% in the past 12 months but still showed an overall fall of 6.3% over the last 2 years. If that improvement was sustained it may indicate the start of an upward trend. The economic situation had not yet shown much improvement and there was evidence to suggest that increasing charges would trigger a fall in car park usage. It was therefore proposed that charges remain unchanged for another year as set out in Table 2, at which time data would be available on whether the recovery in income had accelerated making an increase in charges more justifiable.

- **Parks and Green Spaces**

Charging for the use of parks and green spaces was introduced in 2012/13, with a category for low key commercial use being introduced in 2013/14. It was proposed that the MTFP requirement of 3.8% be applied to each charge, as detailed in Table 5 of the report.

With regard to low key commercial use, the intention was that Council Officers should have discretion to waive or reduce charges in circumstances where a commercial operator was needed in order to provide a catering service as part of a City Council run event. That responsibility was currently delegated to the Director of Local Environment. A sliding scale of charges was recommended for fun fairs.

- **Talkin Tarn**

In last year's Charges Review a proposal for implementing a new charging structure was put forward, and a compromise reached, as detailed in Table 9. It was proposed that those charges should remain for 2014/15. As a product the Talkin Tarn Membership was still in a developmental phase, and it was therefore proposed that the charge should remain at £52.00 per year.

The Business Plan for Talkin Tarn sought to generate income wherever it was feasible and safe to do so. Other charges currently prevalent at Talkin Tarn were outlined in Table 10. Charges had been increased in line with the MTFP requirement with the exception of fishing permits and swimming registration.

- **Public Health and Clean Neighbourhoods**

Central Government determined the range of fines for Fixed Penalty Notices, the fines issued by the City Council being the same as in 2013/14. Shopping trolley and Waste Transfer Note FPN offences had been added to the fees and charges for 2014/15.

- **Waste Services**

It was proposed to increase the charge for bulky waste items by £1 per 5 items to £18.

It was further proposed that the annual charge for clinical waste collections be deleted from the charging structure; the developer charge for new and replacement Euro bins be increased in line with the MTFP requirement; the charge for a 240 litre refuse or garden waste bin should increase; a new charge for replacement gull sacks be introduced; and the option of a reconditioned bin be offered to customers.

There were two facets to the Special Collections service, i.e. bulky waste collections and fixtures and fittings. In the event that Option 1 from Table 11 was chosen for bulky waste collections, each item on the fixtures and fittings list should have a 3.8% increase applied, as shown in Table 13.

- **Summary of Income**

With the exception of Talkin Tarn, the income from which was ring-fenced, acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated level of income of £2,415,000 against the MTFP target of £2,593,000. That represented a shortfall of £178,000 against the MTFP target.

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

- *What was the current occupancy rate at the Enterprise Centre? And could the Business Interaction Centre have an effect on the Enterprise Centre?*

The Director of Economic Development advised that the occupancy was approximately 60% which had not changed over the last twelve months. The biggest issue was that after businesses had been set up they were not moving on. That issue had to be addressed. The Director of Economic Development explained that the Business Interaction Centre offered a different service to the Enterprise Centre with more creative digital business support.

- *Better use could be made of the meeting room at the Enterprise Centre which could increase income.*

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder explained that new businesses were encouraged to move into the Enterprise Centre and the Economic Development Officer had been successful in that respect.

- *Members acknowledged that there were problems with the Enterprise Centre and queried whether it was feasible to continue with low occupancy figures. There would come a point where Officers would need to look at doing something else with part of the building.*
- *Cumbria had a low level of business start up and there were problems with the Enterprise Centre. Pressure should be put onto Government to do more to assist new businesses.*

The Director of Economic Development explained that the Council were trying to do more through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and a number of projects were being introduced. The Council had worked in partnership with the University to develop the Business Interaction Centre which would support small businesses but there needed to be a push by the LEP.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder advised that a meeting of the Carlisle Economic partnership had been held that morning involving both public and private sector. The Partnership was aware of the needs of Carlisle and were working on ideas to ensure the public and private sectors to coordinate plans to enable them to put forward bids for funding which at present had to be submitted through the LEP.

- *In respect of City Centre changes the report offered two options including larger commercial promotions.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that Members were looking at the options seriously and that there had been a healthy interest for large promotions within the City Centre.

- *There was disparity between the performance report on waste services and the budgetary report.*

The Director of Local Environment advised that it was dependent upon when the figures were reported. The Council were currently on target to meet income targets and were proposing to increase the charge for removal of bulky items to £18 which was an increase of £1. That was still a lower charge than some other districts. If the Council did not provide the service there would probably be an increase in the level of fly-tipping.

- *Would the proposed charge for replacement gull sacks be workable?*

The Director of Local Environment advised that only the cost of replacing and delivering a gull sack was passed on to the householder.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report LE.30/13 be welcomed.

(2) That the observations of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as outlined above, be conveyed to the Executive.

- **Economic Development**

Report ED.35/13 was submitted, setting out the proposed fees and charges for the areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic Development Directorate.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.131/13), decided:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges, as set out in the relevant Appendices to Report ED.35/13, with effect from 1 April 2014; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.”



- **Tourism and City Centre Management**

Although it was considered that there was little scope for increasing charges for other organisations across the country, a wider range of tickets together with other items such as fishing licences continued to be sold to try to maintain income. Following the refurbishment of the Old Town Hall the buying / sales strategy had been revised to stock a higher quality of merchandise with higher margins. Other opportunities were also being explored.

- **Assembly Rooms**

It was proposed that charges for use of the Assembly Rooms in 2014/15 be increased by 3.8%. Other opportunities to increase income were being explored as part of the internal refurbishment of the Tourist Information Centre.

- **Enterprise Centre**

Following the review of the Enterprise Centre management of the facility was undertaken from the Civic Centre, as a result of which any income received was solely derived from the rental and service charge of the occupied units. It was proposed to increase the rent and the service charge for 2014/15 by 3.8% in line with inflation.

- **Planning Services**

The planning fees had been increased last year and no further increases were proposed at the moment.

- **Building Control**

Fees were now kept under regular review by the Building Control Service and were set in line with other Cumbrian authorities.

- **Summary of Income Generated**

The 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 £595,600 against the MTFP target of £595,600.

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

- *Members were concerned about the proposed increase in charges at the Enterprise Centre.*

In response to a suggestion from a Member the Director of Economic Development advised that the charge for the use of the Assembly Rooms could be either £66 or £67 rather than the figure quoted in the report.

RESOLVED – That Report ED.35/13 be welcomed.

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## **EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2013**

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### **ROSP.84/13    REVIEW OF CHARGES**

#### **a) Local Environment**

Report LE.30/13 setting out the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15 relative to those services falling within the responsibility of the Local Environment Directorate was submitted.

Referring to the issue of City Centre events and in view of the current economic climate, it was proposed to retain the current charge levels for 2014/15 as set out in Option 1, Table 1 to help maintain demand and the current budgeted level of revenue. Based upon anticipated usage, the proposed charges in Table 1 for 2014/15 would still meet the MTFP budget target requirement of £26,200.

A new charging structure for car parks had been introduced in March 2012 under which car parks were grouped into four categories to reflect the varying demand from users for each car park. No increases in charges had been made since that time, and the existing charges for each category of car park; together with proposed amendments to special event charges to reflect the daily charge for parking; and car park ticket sales were set out at Section 3.2 of the report.

The revised charging structure also included the introduction of Pay by Phone facilities. Table 3a showed that such measures had not prevented a continuing decline in Pay and Display ticket sales, although the introduction of Pay by Phone had helped. The ticket sales from car parks had declined by an average of 11% over the last 2 years.

The report also provided details of the existing Contract Parking Permit (Saver Parking Permits) charges and, as there were no proposals to change the standard parking charges, it was proposed that the contract parking charges remain unchanged.

It was further proposed to introduce a new charge of £6.00 per day for Builders Permits into the car parking scheme.

The summary of the car park ticket income over the last 2 years for the first 6 months of each year showed that the situation was more optimistic than with ticket sales. Overall income had increased by 1.2% in the past 12 months but still showed an overall fall of 6.3% over the last 2 years. If that improvement was sustained it may indicate the start of an upward trend. The economic situation had not yet shown much improvement and there was evidence to suggest that increasing charges would trigger a fall in car park usage. It was therefore proposed that charges remain unchanged for another year as

set out in Table 2, at which time data would be available on whether the recovery in income had accelerated making an increase in charges more justifiable.

Three options for proposed increases in charges for football and rugby pitches, which were substantially in accordance with the MTFP target, were detailed at Tables 6, 7 and 8 – Option 2 being the Officer recommendation.

The report outlined the charging proposals for Waste Services and Street Cleansing (set out on pages 29 - 32 of the bound budget book).

It was noted that, due to low demand for bulky waste collections, it could be difficult to cover the costs of the service. Two options were therefore presented within the report.

Details of the proposed charges in relation to Allotments; use of Parks and Green Spaces; Play Area Inspection Fee; Talkin Tarn Car Parking / Other Charges; Bereavement Services; and Environmental Health were also provided.

With the exception of Talkin Tarn, the income from which was ring-fenced, acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated level of income of £2,415,000 against the Medium Term Financial Plan target of £2,539,000. That represented a shortfall of £178,000 against the MTFP target.

The Executive had considered the matter on 18 November 2013 (EX.129/13 refers) and agreed for consultation the charges as set out in Report LE.30/13 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2014; noting the impact of those charges on income generation, as detailed within the report.

RESOLVED – That report LE.30/13 be received.

## **b) Community Engagement**

The Director of Resources submitted report CD.53/13 setting out the proposed fees and charges for the Hostel services and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) falling within the responsibility of the Community Engagement Directorate.

The Report gave an overview of the current position with regard to the provision of housing related support within the Hostel Services and outlined proposed charges for 2014/15. Pending Executive approval for the revised rent charges, a projected £30,000 deficit on the proposed 2014/15 revenue budget for the Hostels was highlighted. A further review of hostel expenditure would be undertaken to bridge the shortfall and ensure that expenditure was in line with the budget.

The report outlined details of the proposed DFG fees for 2014/15, highlighting the need to review the MTFP for DFGs to accurately reflect the income as part of a review in 2013/14.

The introduction of the hostel charges and DFG proposed fee charges were forecast to generate income of £516,500 and £123,800.

The Executive had considered the matter on 18 November 2013 (EX.130/13 refers) and agreed for consultation the increase in charges, as set out in Report CD.53/13, with effect from 1 April 2014; and noted the impact thereof on income generation as detailed within the report.

RESOLVED – That report CD.53/13 be received.

### **c) Economic Development**

The Director of Resources submitted joint report (ED.35/13) setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic Development Directorate. The proposed charges related to Economic Development and Tourism; and Planning Services.

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 £595,600 against the Medium Term Financial Plan target of £595,600.

The Executive had considered the matter on 18 November 2013 (EX.131/13 refers) and agreed for consultation the charges, as set out in the relevant Appendices to Report ED.35/13, with effect from 1 April 2014; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.

A Member reminded the Panel that a Task and Finish Group had previously scrutinised the Enterprise Centre. As part of the scrutiny the Group had been informed that the Enterprise Centre would be re-roofed with a plastic coating which would have a 25 year guarantee. He asked if the work would be going ahead.

The Director of Resources explained that the plastic roofing was a short term solution which would allow the Council to give further consideration to the future of the Enterprise Centre.

Members commented that they supported the work that was being undertaken in the Enterprise Centre but agreed that the building was no longer suitable. They were satisfied that the occupancy rate had remained steady at 60% in such an uncertain climate.

RESOLVED – That report ED.35/13 be received.

### **d) Governance**

The Director of Resources submitted report GD.55/13 setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the remit of the Governance Directorate.

The report outlined the proposed charges in respect of Electoral Registers; Minute Books, Room Bookings and Access to Information Requests; Health and Safety; and MOT charges.

The decline in land charges income was of great concern. In an attempt to maintain overall income levels the authority had adopted a policy of increasing charges annually. However, in view of the present economic climate and the presence of competitors in the market, it was recommended that the Council did not increase its fees for 2014/15.

The introduction of the proposed charges was forecast to generate income of £152,600 in 2014/15.

The Executive had considered the matter on 18 November 2013 (EX.132/13 refers) and agreed for consultation the charges as detailed within Report GD.55/13 and set out in Appendix A, with effect from 1 April 2014; and noted the impact thereof on income generation as detailed within the report.

RESOLVED – That report GD.55/13 be received.

### **e) Licensing**

The Director of Resources submitted report GD.50/13 setting out the fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Licensing Section of the Governance Directorate. He 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 considered the matter on 18 November 2013 (EX.133/13 refers) and decided

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the charges which would be submitted for consideration by the Regulatory Panel on 20 November 2013.
2. Had considered and approved the appropriate fees under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, as outlined at paragraph 4.7 and Appendix ‘A’(C) of Report GD.50/13.”

RESOLVED – That report GD.50/13 be received.