

Report Title:	Early adoption of changes to fees and charges – reasons for urgency decision
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance
Meeting and Date:	Full Council, 11 March 2024
Responsible Officer(s):	Elizabeth Griffiths, Executive Director for Resources Becky Hatch, Assistant Director for Strategy & Communications
Wards affected:	All

REPORT SUMMARY

This report deals with the decision taken by Cabinet on 29 November 2023, to agree the early adoption of fees and charges, ahead of the 2024-24 Financial Year. The November Cabinet report was considered as an urgency item, following the approval of the Chair of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny, as required.

The Fees and Charges report was originally proposed to be part of the Draft Budget Cabinet Report, which was due to be considered by Cabinet in November 2023. The wider draft Budget report was delayed until the December Cabinet, for a range of reasons to do with the complexities of the council's financial situation. The Fees and Charges report was therefore taken forward as a separate report, to enable changes to fees and charges to be implemented according to the planned timetable, set out below. The separation of the two reports, meant that the Fees and Charges report was entered on to the Forward Plan, with less than the 28 day notice period. Hence it was considered as an Urgency item. Urgency items must be reported to Full Council, in accordance with the council's constitution.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Full Council notes the report and accepts the reasons provided for the Cabinet decision on early adoption of fees and charges being taken as an urgency item.

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Options

Table 1: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
To note and agree the reasons provided for the Cabinet decision on the early adoption of fees and charges being considered as an urgency item.	This is the recommended option

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Fees and Charges report was originally proposed to be part of the Draft Budget Cabinet Report, which was due to be considered by Cabinet in November 2023. The wider draft Budget report was delayed until the December Cabinet, for a range of reasons to do with the complexities of the council's financial situation. The Fees and Charges report was therefore taken forward as a separate report, to enable changes to fees and charges to be implemented according to the planned timetable, set out below. The separation of the two reports, meant that the Fees and Charges report was entered on to the Forward Plan, with less than the 28 day notice period. Hence it was considered as an Urgency item and was agreed by Cabinet on 29 November 2023 on this basis.

3.2 This report takes forward the necessary notification of Full Council, in accordance with the **Constitution, Part 3 - Section 15 para 4 b**. This states that "Following the decision, the decision taker will provide a full report to the next available Council meeting explaining the decision, the reasons for it and why the decision was treated as matter of urgency."

3.3 The council is taking continued action to reduce spend and generate income, and has now agreed a balanced budget for 2024-25. However, the financial situation remains precarious. At Cabinet on 27 September, Members approved an action plan for response which included maximising income from fees and charges. Within this context, it was necessary for the council to consider options for maximising income, to address the budget shortfall in the current financial year, as well as for the 2024-25 financial year and beyond. The early implementation of increases to fees and charges was implemented as part of this action plan, in order to generate increased income which will help to mitigate in year and 2024/25 budget pressures.

Table 2: Key Implications

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
Fees as set out in the November Cabinet Report achieve expected increase in income.	Income generated by 1 st April 2024 <£0.456m	Income generated = £0.456m	Income generated >£0.456m	Income generated >£0.6m	1 January 2024

4. FINANCIAL CONTEXT:

4.1 The financial implications are set out in the November 2023 Cabinet Report on Increases to Fees and Charges.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The urgency decision has adhered to the necessary processes, which includes this report to notify Full Council of the use of urgency powers.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The decision to agree the early adoption of changes to fees and charges, from 1 January 2024, was taken to help reduce the budget gap in 2023-24. This was part of actions taken to reduce financial risk to the council, of being unable to maintain minimum levels of reserves and achieve a balanced budget.

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

7.1 **Equalities.** An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for this decision and is shared within the background documents below. This draws out the equality implications of fees and charges increases, and shares mitigating actions where appropriate.

7.2 **Climate change/sustainability.** Promoting sustainability and tackling climate change are embedded within our decision-making process and inform decisions on a wide range of service areas, including parking and waste charges.

7.3 **Data Protection/GDPR.** There are no data protection implications for this report.

8. CONSULTATION:

8.1 Proposed changes to Parking fees and charges were shared for public consultation for 21 days. Following analysis of feedback from the consultation, 28 days notice was given of the final agreed increases. The consultation was promoted through the RBWM Together online platform and shared through social media, the Residents Newsletter and with stakeholder groups.

8.2 In addition, services have undertaken engagement with service users of specific services, to communicate the proposed increases in charges.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

Date	Activity
29-Nov-23	Cabinet
11-Dec-23	Start of consultation period: Parking Fees and Charges
01-Jan-24	Operation of early adopted Fees and Charges (except Parking)
	End 21-day consultation period (Parking Fees and Charges)
8 Jan-24	28 day notice period (Parking Fees and Charges)
5 Feb-24	Implementation of early adopted Parking Fees and Charges

10. APPENDICES

Not applicable.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 This report is supported by the following background document:

Agenda Document for Cabinet, 29/11/2023, Early Adoption of Fees and Charges item.

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 29/11/2023 19:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

11. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy)</i>	
Elizabeth Griffiths	Executive Director of Resources & S151 Officer	01.02.24	Deputised
Elaine Browne	Deputy Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer	01.02.24	05.02.24
<i>Deputies:</i>			
Andrew Vallance	Deputy Director of Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	01.02.24	06.02.24
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Equalities Officer – to advise on EQiA, or agree an EQiA is not required</i>	
Ellen McManus-Fry	Equalities & Engagement Officer	01.02.24	06.02.24
<i>Other consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Stephen Evans	Chief Executive	01.02.24	05.02.24

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Cllr Jones, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Cllr Werner, Leader of the Council	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
Non-key decision	Yes	Yes

Report Author: Becky Hatch, Assistant Director for Strategy and Communications