

Meeting: Finance Sub-Committee

Date: 23 November 2016

Title: Fees and Charges

Authors: Janice Gillespie

Tel: 0191 643 5701

Service: Finance Service

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report is provided to give an outline of the approach to fees and charges being set across the authority and the current schedule of 2016-17 fees and charges.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Finance Sub Committee are asked to note the content of the report.

3. Detail

The Council delivers a portfolio of services for which it charges. The Council's Financial Regulations on charging policies say each Chief Officer should establish a charging policy for the supply of goods and services; review that annually and report any changes, as appropriate, to Members.

There are a range of charges raised by the Authority, some are discretionary but there are a number where the fees are set external to the authority over which there is no discretion to amend.

In 2012 a piece of work was carried out and reported to Cabinet to set some guiding principles for discretionary charges, which are set out below. These principles have subsequently been reviewed on an annual basis as part of the annual financial planning and budget process to test that they remain relevant and appropriate in the current planning horizon.

- **Fee set by statute;** a range of services provided by the Council are statutory functions and fees and charges are set by Government or within Government Guidelines, for example Planning Applications
- **Universal services are paid for universally – differentiated services are paid for by the user;** in line with the increasing personalisation of public

services it makes sense that the universal services the Council offer will be paid from the money the Council has as a consequence of general and local taxation. Where the service is differentiated and chosen by the consumer, then the services the Council offers will be paid for by the user

- **Matching the market;** where the Council operates in a market, fees and charges will match that market and the quality of the product, for example, in commercial waste the Council's price points will reflect those of the other operators in the Borough. In sport and leisure, where the offer is among the best in the country, then prices will reflect that
- **Staying in line with our neighbours;** where the Council operates a service that is statutory in nature or normal business for a local authority, North Tyneside will stay in line with its neighbours. This will avoid cross-border issues for individuals and communities and should prevent a localised market where that might be unhelpful. It should also help residents in tough financial times, for example in terms of Contributions for Adult Social Care services, school meals prices and burial charges, North Tyneside is towards the cheapest in comparison to our neighbours. Usually, the Council will aim to be around the mid-point for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland – where it is not, we will know why and be able to explain it to Members and customers
- **Considering ability to pay;** given the gap in the standard of living between the richest and poorest in the Borough and the Council's stated aim to raise aspirations, the Council will consider and assess an individual's ability to pay for a service where that makes sense, for example, the national benefit rules and the Housing Benefit system when thinking about rent or the Financial Assessment rules and Contributions Policy when thinking about Adult Social Care contributions
- **Differentiated pricing;** in addition to an individual's ability to pay the Council will consider the personal circumstances and differentiate some services to reflect the fact that residents already pay tax in the Borough and that some activities are good for the health and wellbeing of the people of North Tyneside and therefore we might wish to incentivise some types of residents to participate by paying less, for example, the suite of Ease Cards.

Attached at **Appendix A** is a schedule of the 2016-17 Fees and Charges.