

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

CABINET – 12 February 2008

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(Author: Mark Finch)

FEES & CHARGES 2008/2009

Summary: The report sets out the proposed fees and charges for the financial year 2008/2009

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Charges for services are an important income stream for the authority, and income generated helps support the provision of council services. Income from fees and charges (excluding property rent) makes up around 7% of the council's total revenue income. Some fees, such as those for development control applications, are set by central government, and local authorities have no powers to vary the charges. However there are a broad range of services where the council has power to determine the charge to the recipient. These are commonly called discretionary charges.

2. KEY DECISION

- 2.1 This is a key decision.

3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council priorities:

- A safe and healthy environment
- A well planned place to live which encourages vibrant communities
- A prosperous place to live and work

4. PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES

- 4.1 A review of current charges was undertaken to compare Breckland's fees with those charged by other Norfolk authorities to ensure that Breckland's fees are not wildly different to those of our closest neighbours. Managers have applied inflationary increases where it is considered the fee could support the increased charge.
- 4.2 A more comprehensive review is planned as part of the Value for Money review programme which will take place during this summer. This will cover all statutory and discretionary services provided to customers, whether currently charged or not. It will follow best practice guidelines (including 'Positively Charged' the recently published guide from the Audit commission) and draw on experiences from other authorities to ensure that all potential discretionary income is identified. It will also draw on other tools and resources provided by the Audit Commission on its website. The costs of service provision and any concessions will be covered by the review, and will take into account the demand for services. This will give the authority a better understanding of the costs and income of services so that Members can make informed decisions about the services it wishes to subsidise and understand the opportunity costs of those services it chooses not to charge for. Results from this review will be reported to Cabinet in September 2008.
- 4.2 The schedule in appendix A sets out the proposed fees and charges to take effect from 1st April 2008. This includes both statutory and discretionary fees and charges. Some

charges for services, such as leisure centre activities, are not controlled by Breckland and have therefore been excluded. Statutory charges are set by central government; therefore the current charge is shown in the schedule, but these are liable to be changed when we receive instruction from government.

5. OPTIONS AVAILABLE

- 5.1 Approve the fees and charges as set out in the attached schedule
- 5.2 Retain current charges or recommend alternatives.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 To approve the fees and charges for 2008/2009

7. RISK

- 7.1 I have completed a risk assessment in accordance with the Council's Risk Management methodology and the following risks and mitigating factors have been identified
 - The level of fees set will have a financial impact on the council, as will demand for the services. Ongoing budgetary control and periodic comprehensive reviews of all fees and charges will help the authority control its budget, by adjusting input costs or fees charged.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 To approve the charges set out in fees and charges schedule to take effect from 1st April 2008.
- 8.2 To agree a comprehensive review of fees and charges to be reported back in September 2008.

Appendices: Appendix A – Fees and Charges Schedule 2008/2009

Where appropriate, this report has taken account of the need for compliance with

- The Council's Equal Opportunities Policies
- Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Section 40, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006