

# Medium Term Financial Plan

## Initial Equality Impact Assessment of Budget Proposal 2024/25



### 1. The Proposal

<b>Budget Theme:</b>	Income – annual inflationary impacts
<b>Budget reference:</b>	INC01
<b>Budget proposal 2024/25 (£):</b>	£853,000

The following savings are included within this Theme:

Directorate Reference	Service Area	Budget Proposal	2024/25 Budget reduction
ASS01, CH01, CSD01, PD01, PH01	All council	Annual uplift to fees and charges income budgets held by services (£265,000 Adults, £14,000 Children, £37,000 Corporate Services, £129,000 Place, £10,000 Public Health & Regulatory Services)	£455,000
PD02, PD04	All directorate	Increase in Place fees and charges to cover specific inflationary impacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Garden waste fee increase</li> <li>- Leisure contract increase</li> <li>- Crematorium contract increase</li> <li>- Public toilet increase to 30p</li> </ul>	£276,000
PD03	Planning	Increase in statutory Planning fee income	£50,000
PD05	Parking	Revert back to the pre-covid policy where the mi-permit transaction charge is included within the parking fee to ensure full cost recovery, 10p per transaction	£52,000
PH02	Regulatory Services	Review fees and charge policies for regulatory services over inflation allocation, focus on Licensing and Food Safety	£20,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>£853,000</b>

## Theme narrative:

Annual uplift to general fees and charges to recognise the impact of inflation on the ongoing cost of service delivery. The additional income is directly linked to the principle of ensuring that services recover their full costs, which have gone up because of inflation.

## Summary of changes:

### **ASS01, CH01, CSD01, PD01, PH01 - All council**

Annual uplift to fees and charges income budgets held by services (£265,000 Adults, £14,000 Children, £37,000 Corporate Services, £129,000 Place, £10,000 Public Health & Regulatory Services)

Customers currently pay fees and charges for a wide range of activities and services that they may use such as building control services, planning applications land charge searches, car parking, leisure activities or care related charges.

Some of these fees and charges are set nationally and the council is legally required to adopt these levels, whilst other fees and charges are set at local levels using the council's discretion.

Given the complexities of calculating the financial impact for each individual potential charge that may arise, the first saving within this Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Income theme continues the council's policy of annually inflating its charges to cover the increased costs for goods and services, which have themselves gone up.

The MTFP saving of £455,000 is the value that will be achieved by uplifting all the council's fees and charges budgets by an average of 2% with effect from April 2024.

It should be noted that whilst this proposed increase may be lower than some current national inflationary measures such as the Retail Prices Index or the Consumer Prices Index, it reflects the average increase in income budgets that is realistically feasible to achieve, and well as the average level of increased costs that the council will incur.

Where the council can demonstrate that the costs to deliver a specific service are higher than this base sum, a separate savings item has been included so that local communities can clearly see the specific change and understand how this may impact on them. These items are listed separately below.

### **PD02, PD04 - Place directorate**

Increase in Place fees and charges to cover specific inflationary impacts of discretionary services:

- Garden waste fee increase
- Leisure contract increase
- Crematorium contract increase
- Public toilet increase to 30p.

The Place directorate currently deliver a range of discretionary services to local residents and visitors which generate a charge if they are used. The cost of delivering these specific services has risen by more than the baseline which means that we need to increase the charge to the service user to ensure that the full cost of delivering the service is recovered from those who use them and that they are not being subsidised through the budget.

### **PD03 - Planning**

Increase in statutory Planning fee income.

This proposal reflects an estimate of the additional income that the council expects to receive next year from planning income. Fees for this service are set nationally which means that the council is legally required to adopt any changes, the latest of which will come into effect from 6 December 2023.

Amongst other things the regulations increase planning application fees by 35% for major developments and 25% for all other applications and introduce an annual indexation of planning fees, capped at 10%, from 1 April 2025. The regulations can be viewed [here](#).

### **PD05 – Parking**

Revert back to the pre-covid policy where the mi-permit transaction charge is included within the parking fee to ensure full cost recovery, 10p per transaction.

Users who park in the council's car parks have the option to pay for their stay electronically using the Mi-permit app rather than use cash. The council incurs an administration charge each time someone uses this facility which was previously included as part of the overall car park fee.

During the pandemic a temporary change was made to the policy to remove the transaction charge from the car parking fee and arrange for this cost to be charged to the council. This decision was part of the national response to managing and containing the outbreak and spread of the Covid virus because it sought to actively encourage and increase the usage of the Mi-permit app to pay for their car park stay and deter people from using 'cash', which would reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

In the early stages of the pandemic this cost was funded using Covid monies provided by the government, but these are no longer in place. The proposal is for the policy to be reinstated so that the transaction cost is once again included as part of the total car parking fee.

### **PH02 - Regulatory Services**

Review fees and charge policies for regulatory services over inflation allocation, focus on Licensing and Food Safety.

The introduction of a new case management system in April 2024 creates scope to process tasks more quickly and secure more income through volume of activity.

**Is any of the proposals within this theme a continuation of a previous medium-term financial plan saving?**

**Yes**      No

**If yes, please insert reference number and year of assessment?**

<b>Budget Proposal</b>	<b>Year of assessment</b>	<b>Budget Reference</b>
Annual uplift to fees and charges income budgets	2023/24	CSD24

**If yes, please describe what steps you have taken to review the equality impacts from previous years?**

These charges largely relate to the provision of discretionary services which means that service users, as well as the council, will also have some choice over whether want or need to use the service and the incur the associated cost.

The largest impact in respect of the previous proposal related to those people who are on low incomes and the council has implemented a series of measures that can provide support to these groups, either directly or indirectly. For example, the garden waste service has a pricing policy to support those on low incomes by offering a discount for using the service; for the last 2 years the council has distributed over £5.2m of funding to people on low incomes through the Household Support Fund which is a way of providing financial assistance to cover day to day living expenses, which could include food, energy or even parking.

## 2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups?

Budget Proposal	Equality Impacts – Please consider any potential equalities impacts based on the protected groups below. Please answer High (H), Medium (M), Low (L) or None (N)										Positive (+) or Negative (-)
	Disabled People, including those who are	Race	Men or Women, including those who are pregnant	Sexual Orientation	People on a low income	Age	Religion or belief or none	Marriage or civil partnership	Gender reassignment	Other, for example parents, carers or the Armed Forces. *	
ASS01 CH01 CSD01 PD01 PH01	N	N	N	N	L	N	N	N	N	N	-
PD02, PD04	N	N	N	N	L	N	N	N	N	N	-
PD03	N	N	N	N	L	N	N	N	N	N	-
PD05	N	N	N	N	L	N	N	N	N	N	-
PH02	N	N	N	N	L	N	N	N	N	N	-

### 3. Explanation of customer impact

#### **ASS01, CH01, CSD01, PD01, PH01 - All council**

Annual uplift to fees and charges income budgets held by services (£265,000 Adults, £14,000 Children, £37,000 Corporate Services, £129,000 Place, £10,000 Public Health & Regulatory Services)

There will be a minimal impact on all customers as the rate of increase applied to generic fees and charges is below current levels of inflation as this considers an average for all services and their costs.

However, it is accepted that any increase may disproportionately impact on customers with lower income levels should they access a service which has a charge associated with it

#### **PD02, PD04 - All directorate**

Increase in Place fees and charges to cover specific inflationary impacts:

- Garden waste increase fee
- Leisure contract increase
- Crematorium contract increase
- Public toilet increase to 30p.

There will be a minimal impact on all customers as an uplift is being applied however the increase to these fees and charges will be aligned to inflation and it is anticipated that this will be commensurate with increases in the customers own income levels. It is accepted that this proposal may disproportionately impact on customers with lower income levels should they access a service which has a charge associated with it.

#### **PD03 - Planning**

Increase in statutory Planning fee income.

There will be a minimal impact on all customers as an uplift is being applied however the increase to these fees and charges will be aligned to inflation and it is anticipated that this will be commensurate with increases in the customers own income levels. It is accepted that this proposal may disproportionately impact on customers with lower income levels should they access a service which has a charge associated with it. The council does not have any discretion in the statutory charge applied to these services.

#### **PD05 - Parking**

Revert to the pre-covid policy where the mi-permit transaction charge is included within the parking fee to ensure full cost recovery, 10p per transaction.

There will be a minimal impact on all customers as an uplift is being applied however the increase to these fees and charges will be aligned to inflation and it is anticipated that this will be commensurate with increases in the customers own income levels. It is accepted that this proposal may disproportionately impact on customers with lower income levels should they access a service which has a charge associated with it.

#### **PH02 - Regulatory Services**

Review fees and charge policies for regulatory services over inflation allocation, focus on Licensing and Food Safety

There will be a minimal impact on all customers as an increase is being applied however the increase to these fees and charges will be aligned to inflation and it is anticipated that this will be commensurate with increases in the customers own income levels. It is accepted that this proposal may disproportionately impact on customers with lower income levels should they access a service which has a charge associated with it.

#### **Please describe how you will communicate these changes to your customers.**

Information will be shared in a variety of ways depending on customers and how they use the services but as a minimum the council will publish a complete list of all fees and charges for all services on the website before April 2024. Some services will also contact existing customers where that is reasonable and practical.

## **4. Staff equality impact summary**

**Are there any staffing implications for this proposal?** Yes No

### **Explanation of staff impact**

If yes, please describe the nature of the impact, including how many posts could be affected, please state whether they are vacant, or filled permanently or temporarily.

N/a

## **6. Review and Sign Off**

### **Service Manager Review**

Insert any service manager comments here:

**Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed?** Yes No

**If 'yes', when will the further assessment be completed?**

**Service Manager:**

Melanie Watts

**Date:**

19 November 2024