

Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference:

Date of meeting: 8 November 2005

Portfolio: Finance and Performance Management

Subject: Fees and Charges 2006/07

Officer contact for further information: Peter Maddock – Principal Accountant
(Ext 4602)

Committee Secretary: S G Hill Ext 4249

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the panel consider any views on the policy for increasing fees and charges for 2006/07.

Report:

Introduction

1. As part of the budget setting process the level of fees and charges are considered for the forthcoming financial year. The general premise is that fees and charges will be increased by 2.5% in line with the consumer prices index. However where it can be justified a higher increase should be considered. This report is intended to give members an opportunity to comment on those fees and charges proposed for 2006/07.

Leisure Services

2. The general uplift for fees and charges is specified within the leisure contract, however if there is any exceptional changes to specific charges, these cannot be varied without recourse to the council.

Civil Engineering and Maintenance

3. Car parking fees form the major income source of this portfolio. It is intended that total income will be increased by 2.5%. A report elsewhere on the agenda considers the strategy to be followed and includes a tariff restructure.

Finance and Performance Management

4. There are no fees subject to the annual uplift as income of this portfolio relates to Government Subsidies and Industrial Estate rents.

Corporate Support Services

5. The main source of income to this Portfolio is for Land Charge searches. In recent years the number of private searches carried out has increased dramatically and the level of charge for these is strictly controlled by legislation. It is likely that any increase in the full search fee, over which the council does have discretion, will drive even more people to carry out private searches and the extra income from raising the fee would be lost due to a further fall in the number of full searches carried out.

Planning and Economic Development

6. The two main income areas within this portfolio are Development Control and Building Control fees.
7. Development Control fee levels are controlled by Central Government and given that an increase occurred from 1 April 2005, it is assumed that no increase will be allowed for 2006/07.
8. Building Control Fees are income to the ring-fenced Building Control Charging Account and therefore do not affect the General Fund. The rules governing this are that the council should not intentionally seek to make a surplus over any ongoing three year period and the fee structure should be based on full recovery of costs. It is unlikely that a fee increase could be justified particularly given the problems with recruitment that has occurred.

People First

9. There is little direct income here and nothing that falls within the scope of this review.

Environmental Protection

10. Fees and charges within this portfolio are to be increased by 2.5%. The main areas affected are Pest Control and Animal Welfare. Full details are contained in the more detailed report elsewhere on the agenda.

Community Wellbeing

11. The income here relates to Licences. The 2003 Licensing act transferred responsibilities to Local Councils for the administering and granting of Public Entertainment licenses. The fee structure is governed by statute and there is therefore no discretion on fee levels. Other licenses, which the council can set, are to be increased by 2.5%. Full details are also contained in the separate report.

Housing

12. The Housing Portfolio has a number of fees and charges most of which are income to the Housing Revenue Account. A separate report elsewhere on the agenda deals with this in more detail.

Conclusion

13. The proposed policy for increasing fees and charges for 2006/07 are presented for comment but generally are based on an increase of 2.5%.