

CABINET**Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

Present:-

Councillor Gilby (Chair)

Councillors Holmes
Sarvent
SerjeantCouncillors Baldauf-Good
Davies
Staton

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

**51 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stone and J Innes.

53 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 12th December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**54 FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan for the four-month period February, 2024 to May, 2024 was reported for information.

***RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

55 HOUSING RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES

The Service Director – Housing presented a report seeking approval to set housing rents and service charge levels for the financial year 2024/25.

Social rents were set according to the Government's National Social Rent Policy and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. In accordance with the Government's National Social Rent Policy, which came into effect on 1 April 2020, it was permissible for the Council to increase rents by up to CPI plus 1% per annum, until 1 April 2024. The basis for the annual rent increase was the previous September's Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) which in 2023 was 6.7%, meaning the maximum by which the Council could increase tenants' rents from 1 April 2024 would be 7.7%.

It was therefore recommended that for the financial year 2024/25 all rents (social and affordable) would increase by 7.7%. This would result in an average social rent in 2024/25 of £95.95 per week and an average affordable rent of £108.88 per week.

Details of the proposed increases to heating charges, garage rents, garage site rents, garden assistance scheme charges, water charges, community room charges and charges for warden services were set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report. The increases were set at rates to ensure that the Council could recover the costs of providing the services.

A 7.7% increase in general needs rents (social and affordable) in a 53-week rent year would result in an additional £3.974 million of income in 2024/25 as compared to that achieved in 2023/24.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That for the financial year 2024/25, individual social rents for current general needs tenants be set based on the current national social rent policy, giving a rent increase of 7.7% with effect from 1 April 2024.
2. That for the financial year 2024/25 and onwards, where a social rent property is re-let to a new or transferring tenant the rent level be increased to the target rent for that property.

3. That for the financial year 2024/25, individual affordable rents be set based on the current national social rent policy giving a rent increase of 7.7% with effect from 1 April 2024.
4. That for the financial year 2024/25 and onwards, where an affordable rent property is re-let to a new or transferring tenant the rent level be set by reference to 80% of the market rent (including service charges where applicable) for a similar property at the time of letting, or the formula rent for the property, whichever is greater.
5. That the Housing Revenue Account Service Charges for the financial year 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report, be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS

1. To enable the Council to set the level of council house rents for the financial year 2024/25 in accordance with Government guidelines and the Rent Standard.
2. To enable the Council to set the level of service charges for the financial year 2024/25 to recover the costs of providing these services to tenants.
3. To contribute to the Council's corporate priority to 'improve the quality of life for local people'.

56 CAR PARKS STUDY

The Service Director – Economic Growth presented a report informing Cabinet of the findings of the Chesterfield Car Parking Study that had been undertaken by Ove Arup and Partners in 2023. The aims of the study were to ensure the Council was aware of options and opportunities to improve the provision of car parking in Chesterfield Town Centre and be better informed about car parking demand and the potential for surplus land to be released for regeneration purposes.

The Chesterfield Car Parking Study looked at four key areas related to car parking provision in Chesterfield Town Centre. The key areas were:

- Car parking income.

- Car parking usage.
- Climate change opportunities across the car parking estate.
- Regeneration opportunities on Chesterfield Borough Council owned car parks.

The study found that the income generated by the car parks was not sufficient to meet current income targets and recommended that a review of car parking charges was carried out at least once a year and that flexibility was built into the fees and charges structure so that charge increases could be facilitated as seamlessly as possible, if more frequent increases were needed.

The study also found that there was considerable spare capacity within the Council's car parks, with current occupancy levels shown in paragraph 4.16 of the officer's report.

It was reported that to meet the Council's climate change ambitions, there was a need to scale up EV charging capacity to meet future demand and that the Council should also investigate the option of installing solar canopies at some of the car parks.

The Chesterfield Car Parking Study highlighted options and opportunities to improve the Council's car parking estate from a sustainability and regeneration perspective. It was likely that external funding would be required to deliver some of the highlighted regeneration opportunities on those car parking assets identified as being surplus to need.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the Chesterfield Car Parking Study and its findings be endorsed.
2. That the following suggestions made in the Chesterfield Car Parking Study be approved;
 - That officers develop further recommendations for investment in car parking provision, and the reuse of excess parking to support the regeneration of the town centre
 - That car parking charges be reviewed on an annual basis with an in-year appraisal to assess performance against budgetary targets

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To enable Chesterfield Borough Council to implement appropriate changes to the management and delivery of Chesterfield Borough Council owned car parking provision to support the vitality and viability of Chesterfield Town Centre.

57 CAR PARK FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25

The Town Centre Operations Manager presented a report recommending the proposed fees and charges for council owned car parks for the financial year 2024/25, to be implemented from 1 April 2024.

It was reported that the new fees and charges policy adopted by Cabinet on 12 December 2023 proposed that all fees and charges should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Car parking fees and charges had historically been reviewed on a two-yearly cycle. The recent Car Parking Study had however recommended moving to an annual review of fees and charges to ensure price increases took account of changes in in-year costs and inflation. This change in practice was reflected in the officer's report and would be the approach going forwards.

The proposed fees and charges were set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report and had been based on a robust assessment of the impact of in-year cost increases, current demand and the Council's overall financial position.

The report also documented the outcomes of the review that had been undertaken of the current free residents parking scheme that provided free parking before 10am and after 3pm from Monday to Saturday, and free all day parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays to Borough residents on selected car parks. The removal of the scheme was not recommended as it supported both residents and town centre businesses to make use of the town centre. However, the introduction of a small charge to use the scheme was viewed as both realistic and sustainable given the nature and extent of the current financial pressures facing the Council.

It was therefore recommended that users of the scheme would pay a fee of £1 before 10am and £2 after 3pm from Monday to Saturday, and £2 on Sundays Bank Holidays (all day). It was estimated that this change could achieve additional income £126,305 per annum, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the officer's report.

It was noted that increasing car parking the fees and charges would assist the Council in delivering a balanced budget for 2024/25 and help relieve pressure on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan.

It was anticipated that increasing the fees and charges to the levels recommended would potentially raise an additional £234,000 of income over a twelve-month period. This figure included an assumed attrition rate of 5%.

Councillor Holmes asked for his vote to be recorded against the Cabinet's decisions to approve the recommendations in the car parking fees and charges report.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the recommended increases to the fees and charges for car parks, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the officer's report, be approved for implementation from Monday 1 April 2024.
2. That a revision to the current Residents Parking Scheme, to introduce a one-off tariff of £1 before 10am (Monday to Saturday) and a one-off tariff of £2 after 3pm (Monday to Saturday) and a one-off tariff of £2 on a Sunday (all day) and £2 on Bank Holidays (all day), be approved.
3. That the Service Director for Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing, be delegated authority with the Cabinet Member for Town Centre and Visitor Economy, to apply appropriate negotiated fees and charges for new activities and opportunities that arise during the period covered by this report.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS

1. The Council continues to face significant financial challenges. The sustained period of austerity since 2010, the ongoing risks and

uncertainties over future funding arrangements, the budgetary impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a sustained period of exceptionally high inflation, have all impacted on the Council's financial position.

2. The Council's budget strategy is to deliver a balanced and sustainable budget. Given the forecast budget deficits it is important that all potential increases to income streams are implemented as soon as possible to help mitigate these pressures.
3. It is therefore prudent to implement an uplift to assist the Council in achieving a balanced budget for 2024-25 and to continue to recover ground on the increasing costs associated with the delivery of car parking and other town centre operations.