

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25

Item FRP 23/28 referred from Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee of 14 November 2023

The joint report of the Director of Central Services and the Director of Finance and Transformation set out the proposed fees and charges for the provision of services in respect of legal fees, photocopying, Street Naming and Numbering, local land charges searches and enquiries, Tonbridge Castle and recovering unpaid Council Tax debts from 1 April 2024.

In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2024/25 consideration had been given to a range of factors, including the Borough Council's overall financial position, market position, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback, apart from which a set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges had also been taken into account and were summarised in 1.1.2 of the report.

A point of clarification/amendment was made in respect of 1.2.4 of the report, which should read "... In respect of the fees set out at 1.2.1 above, the Supreme Court guideline hourly rates may change from time to time, so it is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that the level of legal fees charged by the Council is in accordance with the applicable rates set out in the Supreme Court guidelines...".

Moreover, additional information was sought on the number of wedding ceremonies held in the Castle Chamber in the current financial year in order to ascertain whether there was any impact on the business by the fee increase from 2022/23 to 2023/24, although Members were reminded that there would normally be a lag in the data due to the advanced booking nature of wedding ceremonies.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the proposed charges for legal costs, as set out in 1.2 of the report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2024;
- (2) the current photocopying charges of £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate, as set out in 1.3.4 of the report, be retained;
- (3) the proposed fee schedules for Street Naming and Numbering, as set out in 1.4 of the report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2024, subject to clarification of the percentage of the proposed fee increase as indicated in 1.4.4 of the report;
- (4) the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries, as set out in Annex 1 and 1.5 of the report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2024;

- (5) the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 related to Tonbridge Castle, as set out in 1.6 of the report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2024; and
- (6) the amount of costs charged in 2024/25 to recover unpaid Council Tax debts be increased from £100 to £110, as set out in 1.7 of the report, with effect from 1 April 2024.

***Recommended to Cabinet**