

Cabinet

06 January 2026

Part 1 - Public

Executive Key Decision



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Cabinet Member

Martin Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste & Technical Services; and
Des Keers, Cabinet Member for Communities

Responsible Officer

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Report Author

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Fees and Charges 2026/27 – Legal Fees, Photocopying, Land Charges, Street Naming and Numbering, Tonbridge Castle, Events, Billboards and Banners and Court Fees for Council Tax and Business Rates

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

1.1 This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 covering Legal Fees, Photocopying, Land Charges, Street Naming and Numbering, Tonbridge Castle, Events, Billboards and Banners and Court Fees for Council Tax and Business Rates.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.

2.2 It is important that fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis in accordance with a set of guiding principles to ensure the Council can continue to provide the existing range and standard of services and cover increases in expenditure.

3 Recommendations

3.1 It is RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- 1) the proposed charges for legal costs as set out in section 5.1 of the report be approved;
- 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 be retained as set out in paragraph 5.2.
- 3) the Fee Schedule for Street Naming and Numbering as set out in section 5.3 of the report be adopted from 1 April 2026;
- 4) the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in section 5.4 of the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026;
- 5) the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Tonbridge Castle as set out in section 5.5 (5.5.4 to 5.5.13) of the report be approved;
- 6) the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Open Spaces and for charity and community events set out in section 5.6.2 of the report be approved; and
- 7) authority be delegated to the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive to negotiate fees for individual commercial events on Council-owned land as set out in section 5.6.4;
- 8) the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Billboards and Banners as set out in section 5.7.1 of the report be approved; and
- 9) the amount of costs charged in 2026/27 to recover unpaid council tax and business rates debts remain at the 2023/24 levels (section 5.8.8).

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 These proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 are normally within the purview of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee but due to cancellation this has now been sent direct to Cabinet.
- 4.2 In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2026/27 consideration has been given to a range of factors, including the Council's overall financial position, market position, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback.
- 4.3 The proposed charges for 2026/27 have also considered a set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges reproduced below for the benefit of this Committee:
 - Fees and charges should reflect the Council's strategic priorities and other corporate aims recognising there may be trade-offs as these are not mutually exclusive;

- Fees and charges should have due regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- If there is to be a subsidy from the Council tax payer to the service user this should be a conscious choice;
- The Council should look to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere, in the context of its strategic priorities and other corporate aims.
- Fees and charges should normally be reviewed at least annually (unless fixed by statute or some other body);

4.4 Fees and charges should not be used to provide a subsidy from the Council taxpayer to commercial operators;

- There should be consistency between charges for similar services;
- Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern so as not to preclude, where appropriate, access to Council services on the grounds of ability to pay.

4.5 It is essential in light of the Council's overall financial position that opportunities are taken to maximise income, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings and Transformation Strategy. Attention has been given to the fees and charges applied by neighbouring Council's, and averages across the County, and these comparisons are included in relevant sections of the report for Member consideration.

5 **Proposal(s)**

5.1 **Legal fees payable by third parties**

5.1.1 From time to time the Council's legal fees can be recovered from third parties, for example, costs in connection with section 106 agreements required to be entered into by developers seeking planning permission for their schemes. Our level of fees has historically followed the Supreme Court guideline hourly rates. The guideline hourly rates were last updated on 1st January 2025 and are currently as follows for Kent, which falls under National Band 1: -

Solicitors and legal executives with over 8 years post qualification experience	£288
Solicitors and legal executives with over 4 years post qualification experience	£242
Other solicitors or legal executives and fee earners of equivalent experience	£197
Trainee solicitors, paralegals and fee earners	£139

5.1.2 For some Property transactions the amount to be charged in connection with the Council's legal work is indicated in the Property document or Lease and in such cases the amount stated in such documents will apply on a case-by-case basis.

5.1.3 For certain leasehold and miscellaneous property transactions the Council does not charge the full fee for the legal and administrative work undertaken as the operators, who are often sole traders and small businesses, have to pay full market rate for the rental of the business premises in accordance with statutory provisions. This is for instance the case with regard to lease renewals where only a contribution towards legal and administrative work is charged of £250. It is proposed to continue with this approach to assist the local economy.

5.1.4 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Council's charges follow the rates set out above and continue to reflect existing practises highlighted above. In respect of the fees set out at 5.1.1 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. This will avoid the necessity of a further report should the guideline hourly rates change.

5.2 Photocopying Charges

5.2.1 A photocopying service is offered for members of the public calling at the council's main offices or requiring copies of Council documents sent by post. The current charges are 10p for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate.

5.2.2 These charges are intended to cover the costs of the photocopy meter charge (including toner), paper and an allowance towards the staff time in looking out documents and postage where appropriate.

5.2.3 The level of charge was reduced in 2007/08 after remaining static for a number of years to comply with Freedom of Information requirements. The marginal cost per copy (including paper) is still approximately £0.10 per copy. Comparative charges in neighbouring authorities have been somewhat difficult to ascertain and many

appear not to charge for photocopying. However, it is considered appropriate to retain a charge to avoid requests for multiple copies of pages and to cover cases where documents cannot be provided by email. It is therefore suggested that the current charge be maintained.

5.2.4 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet be recommended to retain 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.

5.3 Street Naming and Numbering

5.3.1 The requirement to provide a Street Naming & Numbering (SNN) service is derived from the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 and the County of Kent Act 1981. The TMBC Street Naming & Numbering Policy sets out the framework under which the service is delivered in this authority.

5.3.2 The IT GIS Team are responsible for delivery of this service. The actual cost of service delivery has been calculated by recording staff processing time, software costs and postage costs. The service generates an income of circa £46,000 a year. Neighbouring boroughs have their costs calculated in a different way from TMBC, where new developments can be more costly and single addresses can be less costly, but the overall income is balanced.

5.3.3 Members had previously agreed for prior year reviews with the below relevant priorities:

5.3.4 There should be no overall reduction of income to the Council through the SNN function;

- The cost of SNN to the Council should, where possible, be recovered through fees and charges (noting that this is not always possible, and not always desirable);
- Ensure there are no 'perverse incentives' to apply for alternative naming schemes to minimise costs;
- Ensure there is clarity in the fee schedule to avoid confusion and the need for officer discretion in charging fees;
- Where workloads are sufficient to justify such, additional new fees should be considered.

5.3.5 One of the primary objectives is to ensure that cost of SNN to the Council should, where possible, be recovered through fees and charges. Based on estimated costs of delivery of the function and the need to meet this objective, the proposals below are based on one increase in the region of 3.5% (rounded to nearest £) effective from 1 April 2026.

New Properties

Category	Up to three in-fill properties on an existing street	Current Fee 2025/26	Proposed Fee 2026/27
1	Addressing one new in-fill property	£240	£250
2	Addressing two to three in-fill properties	£130 Per Property	£135 per Property
	Where four or more properties are to be named or numbered, the fee for new developments (below) will be levied.		
	Four or more in-fill properties on an existing street, or new properties on a new street		
3	Fee for naming of a street, other than in relation to new property addressing	£290	£302
4	Fee for addressing plots, including street naming if Required 1- 4 Units	£290 + £50	£302 + £52
Category	Up to three in-fill properties on an existing street	Current Fee 2025/26	Proposed Fee 2026/27
5	5 – 10 Units	£290 + £40	£302 + £42
6	11 or more units	£600+ £20	£624 + £21

Existing Properties

Category		Current Fee 2025/26	Proposed Fee 2026/27
7	Renumbering an existing property	£110	£114
8	Renaming an existing property, not in a current numbering scheme	£110	£114
9	Registering the addition or change or an alias to a numbered property	£110	£114
10	Removing an existing alias from a numbered property	No charge	No charge
11	Rename an existing street	£2,220	£2,309
12	Rename a block of flats	£2,220	£2,309
13	Fee for addressing units (flats) when splitting an existing property	£150 per unit	£156 per unit
14	Fee for addressing a single property when merging separate units	£240	£250

5.3.6 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that the above fee Schedule for Street Naming and Numbering be adopted from 1 April 2026.

5.4 Land Charges

- 5.4.1 Maintenance of the land charges register is a mandatory function of the Council. The Register now sits within the HM Land Registry digitised register. Search agents use this register along with collecting information from various departments within the Council to complete the Con29 (a “personal search”) which provide a commercial service to people seeking to buy a property (residential or commercial), and more generally those carrying out “due diligence” in relation to a property transaction.
- 5.4.2 The Council charge for Con29/Con29O (Enquiries of Local Authority) searches, which is backed by the Council’s indemnity insurance in the event of there being an error in the search result. The Council is therefore in competition with personal search companies for this fee: if the fee is set too high, it is likely more people will engage a search agent to undertake a personal search rather than pay the Council’s fees. The Con 29 form is a search setting out a standard set of enquiries agreed by central government, the Law Society and local authorities.
- 5.4.3 The Local Land Charges Act 1975 (“the Act”) and the Local Authorities (England) (Charges for Property Searches) Regulations 2008 (“the Regulations”) enable local authorities to charge for their property search services and set out rules for calculating the fees. The charges must be on a cost recovery basis and not on a “profit basis” and so the Council is legally restrained in its approach to such fee setting.
- 5.4.4 The regulations allow for the fact that the fee has to be set in advance and so is based on an estimate of the likely level of searches received and the likely expenditure of the local authority in connection with answering those enquiries for the forthcoming year. The Act provides that registering authorities must secure that taking one financial year with another, that fee income does not exceed the cost of providing the services. This applies to the Official Search of the Land Charges Register. The Regulations apply in respect of the Official Enquiries of Local Authorities (more commonly known as Con 29) and further provide that over any three-year period the authority should not make a profit in relation to the fees it has charged.
- 5.4.5 The housing and commercial property market is known to be a volatile area of activity where income can fall, or alternatively increase, quickly.

The LLC1 search migrated to HM Land Registry on 25th April 2024 and from this date the Council no longer receives LLC1 income, whilst retaining responsibility to maintain the register. It is envisaged that this loss of income should be accounted for (at least in part) in fee setting for 2026/27 financial year (FY). Since the migration was completed, officers have reviewed the level of fees charged to ensure that they reflect the time spent on dealing with the relevant enquiries. **The table below** shows the fees for land charges searches and enquiries currently charged by TMBC and by other Councils in Kent for comparison.

Current Search fees for Kent Authorities

2025/2026 (including VAT)

Local Authority	Residential Con29	Commercial Con29	Optional Con29O	Additional Questions	Additional Parcels
Ashford LLC1 & Con 29	£105.00	£205.00	£17.00	£50.00	£33.00
Canterbury Con 29 only	£153.00	£207.60	£20.00 to £31.00 each for commercial £15.00 to £22.00 each for residential	£31.00	N/A
Dartford LLC1 & Con 29	£180.00	£220.00	£20.00	£20.00	£20.00
Dover Con 29 only	£165.50	£165.50	£17.15 (Q22 - £26.95)	N/A	£15.00
Folkestone & Hythe LLC1 and Con 29	£173.00	£173.00	£14.46	N/A	£20.64
Gravesham Con 29 Only	£170.40	£247.20	£16.80 (Q22 £30.00)	£30.00	£21.60
Mid Kent (Maidstone) LLC and Con 29	£195.80	£195.80	£17.85 (Q22 £33.10)	£25.20	£31.25
Medway Con 29 only	£72.00	£72.00	£15.00 (Q22 £22.00)	N/A	£22.20
Sevenoaks Con 29 only	£168.00	£168.00	£26.00	N/A	£22.00
Mid Kent (Swale) LLC and Con 29	£195.80	£195.80	£17.85 (Q22 £33.10)	£25.20	£26.45
Tonbridge & Malling Con 29 Only	£168.00	£351.60	£24.00	£27.00	£16.80

Thanet LLC and Con 29	£196.40	£225.00	£13.50 (Q22 £18.60)	N/A	£26.50
Mid Kent (Tunbridge Wells) LLC and Con 29	£195.80	£195.80	£17.85 (Q22 £33.10)	£25.20	£26.45

5.4.6 Proposed increase in fees to be effective from 1 April 2026 are as follows:

- Residential CON29 fee increase [from £168.00] to £174.00 including VAT (overall increase 3.6%)
- Commercial CON29 fee to stay at £351.60 including VAT, no change as already considered high when compared to others
- Optional CON29 questions increase [from £24.00] to £25.20 including VAT (overall increase 5.0%)
- Supplementary questions increase [from £27.00] to £28.20 including VAT (overall increase 4.4%)
- Additional Parcels increase [from £16.80] to £18.00 including VAT (overall increase 7.1%)
- Expedited fee increase [from £58.80] to £61.20 including VAT (overall increase 4.1%)
- Refined data to increase [from £12.00] to £13.20 including VAT (overall increase 10%)

5.4.7 It is not believed that it is appropriate to have any concessionary charges apply to these fees given that the search function supports the sale and purchase of private property. Members are reminded of the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have regard to the requirement to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) to advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups and (iii) to foster good relations between people from different groups, however it is not believed that these charges will have an adverse impact on any particular group protected by the 2010 legislation. The charges will be the same for everyone who requires the Services and there does not appear to be any disproportionate effect on any of the protected groups.

5.4.8 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in Section 8 be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026.

5.5 Tonbridge Castle

5.5.1 There are three levels of fees at Tonbridge Castle:-

Type 1 “Fixed rate”	Type 2 “Discount / commission when criteria is met”	Type 3 “Events”
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attraction Tickets (Castle Tours) Vast Majority of Weddings 	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attraction Tickets (Castle Tours – e.g. discount for groups) School parties (1 place free in 10) Castle event partners (Partners who book Weddings / Events) 	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events where different levels of commission or fees are negotiated between TMBC and Event Organiser for events on: Castle Lawn and grounds (where the Chamber is booked as part of a package) Gatehouse / Council Chamber (Where Partners enter in to an agreement to hold functions and the income to TMBC will vary)

5.5.2 The Castle was originally programmed to be closed from November through to December 2024 for roof works, however as the duration of works was not sufficient this was moved to January through to April/May 2025. This resulted in the team not being able to book internal events, weddings and school trips for the November to December 2024 period, with this then moving to January to May 2025 which extended to end July 2025 resulting in greater losses of income through our peak period.

5.5.3 A report on the feasibility of an inhouse cafe operation to replace the reception area is scheduled to be presented at the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee on the 26 May 2026 with decision by Cabinet on 2 June 2026.

5.5.4 Proposed pricing for Castle tours 2026/27: -

Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Adult*	£9.90	£9.90	£10.50	£10.90
Concessions* Jun/Senior/Student	£7.15	£7.15	£7.50	£7.80
Family Ticket* 2 adults 2 children	£30.00	£30.00	£32.00	£33.30
Season Ticket Adult*	£30.00	£35.00	£37.00	£38.50

5.5.5 Additional tour fees 25/26:

Item	Cost	Comment
Castle Tour Guide – Commercial	£36.50	One off - charge per tour guide

A Tour guide is a relatively new concept which was introduced for during 2024/25 and whilst it has limited demand, does offer tour groups a more personalised tour of the Castle. The fee will remain in place and has been increased in line with all charges

5.5.6 Proposed fees for schools 2026/27

5.5.7 Referring to point 5.5.2 this resulted in the team not being able to book school visits for the November to December 2024 period and then to January to May 2025. Schools were scheduled from May to July 2025 which again had to be moved or most cancelled. This is a loss of income and also work is needed to bring back the schools that have now booked with other venues.

5.5.8 Costs for school visits do not include VAT.

The key difference between the normal entrance fee which is charge inclusive of VAT, is that you have the audio tour guide included with the price of the ticket.

Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Adult	£9.46	£9.46	£9.99	£10.40
School Children	£6.60	£6.60	£6.99	£7.30
Education Facilities includes toys, dressing up clothes, games, paper, pens and 2 tour guides (1 teacher free per 10 children. For special needs groups, carers admitted free as required)	£104.50	£110	£110	£115

5.5.9 Ceremonies – fee model – Chamber

Chamber	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Weddings -					
Monday - Thursday	£990	£1,020	£1,050	£1,090	£1,130
Friday	£1085	£1,120	£1,155	£1,200	£1,245
Saturday - Sunday	£1,125	£1,160	£1,195	£1,245	£1,295

Ceremonies – fee model - Great Hall

Great Hall	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Weddings -					
Monday - Thursday	£1,100	£1,100	£1,160	£1,200	£1,245
Friday	£1,400	£1,400	£1,460	£1,500	£1,560
Saturday - Sunday	£1,450	£1,450	£1,510	£1,550	£1,600

Ceremonies reception – fee model – Chamber

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Receptions -					
Monday - Thursday	£1,270	£1,270	£1,320	£1,370	£1,425
Friday	£1,550	£1,550	£1,600	£1,665	£1,730
Saturday - Sunday	£1,600	£1,600	£1,665	£1,730	£1,800

Other occasions to hire - Chamber

Chamber	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Events like Renewal of Vows/Baby Naming / Wakes			
Monday - Thursday	£380	£380	£400
Friday, Saturday - Sunday	£630	£630	£650

This hire is a new venture and growing so a set charge has been applied as opposed to chamber conference hire. This does not include evening hire.

5.5.10 In respect of weddings, these have suffered as a result of castle closures relating to repairs to the roof, a lag in bookings may be felt due to couples not being able to view the venue for 7 months during its closure.

5.5.11 Chamber – additional fees

Additional Ceremony fees	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Corkage Table	£55	£100	£103	£110

5.5.12 Chamber Hire – Conferencing

Venue	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Chamber Half Day	£110	£115	£119	£123
Chamber Full Day	£220	£230	£237	£245
Chamber Evening	£110	£225	£232	£240
Castle Conference Room Half day	£83	£85	£88	£91
Castle Conference Room Full Day	£165	£170	£175	£182
Castle Conference Evening	£83	£195	£200	£210

5.5.13 Castle Hire – Paranormal Investigations

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Paranormal Night Hire	£650	£680	£687	£715

5.5.14 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the proposed scale of fees for Tonbridge Castle set out in Section 5.5 (5.5.4 to 5.5.13) be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026.

5.6 Fee and Charges for Events on open spaces

5.6.1 There are various levels of fees and charges based on numbers of people attending an event at any one time.

5.6.2 For each event there is an administration fee for the cost of processing the application, and an event fee for the associated costs of maintaining and running the open spaces.

Administration Fees – Charity and Community events

Admin Fee – per booking

Type of event	Maximum attendees (at once)	Administration fee 2025/26	Administration fee 2026/27
Charity or community	Less than 200	£29	£30
	Between 200 and 1,000	£58	£60
	More than 1,000	£116	£120

Land Hire Fees – Charity and Community events

Event Fee – per day

Type of event	Maximum attendees (at once)	2025/26 Charge “if free to attend”	2025/26 Charge “If charging to attend”	2026/27 Charge “if free to attend”	2026/27 Charge “If charging to attend”
Charity or community	Less than 100	£20	£50	£21	£52
	Between 100 and less than 500	£116	£150	£120	£156
	Between 500 – 2,000	£150	£180	£156	£187
	Between 2,001 and less than 5,000	£200	£500	£208	£520

5.6.3 Any changes to the fees charged will only be considered in exceptional circumstances by the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive.

Commercial Events

5.6.4 Agreed for 2024/25 was to allow greater flexibility in respect of one-off events, it was approved for commercial events that we do not publish any fees, as these will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis to optimise and enhance revenue income. Members are asked to note however that any negotiated fees for commercial events would not fall below previous year and will receive the appropriate % uplift

5.6.5 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Open Spaces and for charity and community events set out in section 5.6.2 of the report be approved.

5.6.6 It is **RECOMMENDED** that authority be delegated to the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive to negotiate fees for individual commercial events on Council-owned land as set out in section 5.6.4.

5.7 Billboards and Banners

5.7.1 Fees in regard to this form of advertisement were reviewed and approved by members for 2024/25 this has simplified the process and ensured that there is a charge applied for all organisations seeking this service, this was not the case in past years.

Type of event	Hire Duration 2 weeks	Charge 2025/26	Charge 2026/27
Commercial	Billboards (A0) Three billboards to show advert	£250 + VAT	£260 + VAT
	Notice boards (A2 size) Four notice boards to show advert	£150 + VAT	£156 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) Three banners to show advert	£200 + VAT	£208 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) up to 6no. Max	£350 + VAT	£364 + VAT
Type of event	Billboards - Duration 2 weeks	Charge 2025/26	Charge 2026/27
Community	Billboards (A0) Three billboards to show advert	£75 + VAT	£78 + VAT
	Notice boards (A2 size) Four notice boards to show advert	£50 + VAT	£52 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) Three banners to show advert	£50 + VAT	£52 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) up to 6no. Max	£75 + VAT	£78 + VAT

Type of event	Hire Duration 2 weeks	Charge 2025/26	Charge 2026/27
Charity	Billboards (A0) Three billboards to show advert	£30 + VAT	£31 + VAT
	Notice boards (A2 size) Four notice boards to show advert	£20 + VAT	£21 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) Three banners to show advert	£20 + VAT	£21 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) up to 6no. Max	£20 + VAT	*£31 + VAT

*In 2024/25 a nominal charge to charities was made for banners in regards of up to 6 banners, this has been slightly increased to apply a fair cost based on the number of banners being displayed.

5.7.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the proposed scale of fees for Billboards and Banners set out in Section 5.7.1 be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026.

5.8 Council Tax and Business Rate Court Costs

5.8.1 The Council is obliged by law to collect all unpaid amounts of council tax and business rates and therefore must take recovery action through the Magistrates' Court to obtain the necessary order.

5.8.2 Following a review in 2024 the amount charged to Council Taxpayers was increased to £110.00 from April 2024. Business rates costs remained unchanged at £180.00. These amounts remained for 2025/26 and any proposed changes need to be justified to the Courts to allow the increase.

5.8.3 As the level of costs has only recently been reviewed and the Council's cost of recovery has not significantly increased, it is not proposed to seek the Court's approval to increase the level of costs requested from council taxpayers or business rate payers.

5.8.4 It is **RECOMMENDED**, therefore, that the amount of costs charged in 2025/26 should remain the same for the 2026/27 financial year.

6 Other Options

6.1 For each of the services included in the report a proposed charge has been included considering the guiding principles for the annual review. Members may of course wish to bring forward other options such as lower or higher charges.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

7.1 The fees and charges have been considered in accordance with a set of guiding principles and the opportunity to maximise income has been taken into account where possible.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 A decision is required now on the proposed fee structure for these activities to ensure that the Council has timely and up-to-date arrangements in place to administer service requests when received.
- 8.2 Failure to update fees and charges appropriately when costs are increasing will expose the council to financial pressure with its Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Section 93 of the 2003 Local Government Act allows authorities to charge for services that they have a power [but not a duty] to provide.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 In bringing forward proposals, fees and charges of surrounding local authorities have been considered.
- 10.2 Under Section 93 of the 2003 Local Government Act there is no requirement for the Council to consult with the public.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 Implementation of all the proposed charges will be from 1 April 2026.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 12.1.1 No issues. Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	None