

# Executive

Excerpt of the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 3 October 2019 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa, at 6.00pm.

**Present:** Councillors Cooke, Day, Falp, Hales and Matecki.

**Also present:** Councillors: Nicholls (Chairman of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee); Davison (Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee); Boad (Liberal Democrat Group Observer); and Cullinan (Labour Group Observer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grainger, Norris and Rhead.

## 48. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the items in this excerpt.

### **Part 1**

(Items for which a decision by the Council was required)

## 49. **Fees and Charges 2020/21**

The Executive considered a report from Finance detailing the proposals for discretionary Fees and Charges in respect of the 2020 calendar year. It also showed the latest Fees and Charges 2019/20 income budgets, initial 2020/21 and the actual out-turn for 2018/19.

The Council was required to update its Fees and Charges in order that the impact of any changes could be fed into the setting of the budget for 2020/21. Discretionary Fees and Charges for the forthcoming calendar year had to be approved by Council.

In the current financial climate, it was important that the Council carefully monitored its income, eliminated deficits on service specific provisions where possible and therefore minimised the forecast future General Fund revenue deficit.

Some additional fees had been created to generate additional income for the service areas concerned and others in response to new legislation. (Animal Welfare – boarding, pet shops, hiring of horses), Bowls (Commonwealth Games related). These were highlighted in Appendix A to the report and also in paragraphs 11.4, 12.4, 12.5 and 13.1 of the report. Other charges had been deleted due to legislation changes or changes in the way the service was provided. A 2% increase in Fees and Charges income had been allowed for in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Budget Managers had been tasked with seeking to achieve additional income of 3%.

The Regulatory Manager had to ensure that licensing fees reflected the current legislation. The fees charged should only reflect the amount of

officer time and associated costs needed to administer them. New fees were also being proposed to cover new responsibilities.

Bereavement – new cremation fees were proposed to meet potential new or differing customer requirements.

Land Charges and Building Control fees were ring fenced accounts: Income levels for Land Charges had reduced due to the transfer of the LLC1 fee to the Land Registry Service. There had been a corresponding fall in staffing costs and payments to WCC to reflect this. Income and expenditure were carefully monitored to avoid creating a large surplus (or deficit) on the Land Charges Control Account, which should break even. Building Control was subject to competition from the private sector and had to set charges that were competitive with this market.

Management of the Council's Leisure Centres was now by Everyone Active. The contract definition stated that 'The Contractor shall review the (following) core products and prices each year and submit any proposed changes to the Authority for approval (the "Fees and Charges Report")'. Everyone Active were expected to request an increase on some of these prices in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The current prices for the core products and prices were shown at Appendix B to the report. Previously, when the leisure centres were operated by the Council, most years the charges were increased by around RPI. It was recommended that, provided the changes proposed by Everyone Active to the core products and prices were within the September RPI, that the Heads of Culture and Finance, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holders, could accept the changes. In reviewing the proposed increases, officers would consider previous years increases to avoid automatic year on year increases in prices.

Not all of the new parking locations that were being opened for the proposed closure of Covent Garden car park had come into operation, due to the delay in the closure of Covent Garden (although extra spaces had been created at Court Street, Bedford Street and Chandos Street). However, Riverside House had been open at weekends to provide additional parking for the town. Consideration was being given to the introduction of free parking for electric vehicles in council car parks. This would be subject to a future report to the Executive, which should include details of how this would be funded.

In terms of alternatives, the various options affecting individual charges were outlined in the main body of the report, at Sections 8 to 16. Fees and Charges for 2020/21 remained static i.e. remained at the same level as for 2019/20, which would increase the savings to be found over the next five years unless additional activity could be generated to offset this.

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee noted that Everyone Active had 18 core prices on which they had held the price of seven last year and had informally indicated that four of these would be held again this year. It

was also noted that officers would seek a contract amendment with Everyone Active, so that the proposed fees could be considered earlier.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee did not scrutinise the report, other than the pest control charges in Appendix A to the report (page 39). The Committee asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm that the charging reductions applied for mice infestation would also apply to the new charge for rat infestation.

If this was not the case, the Committee formally recommended to the Executive that the reductions should be applied. The Executive were required to vote on this if the charging reductions did not apply because it then formed a recommendation to them.

However, after the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, officers explained to Members that the reductions applied for mice infestation would also apply for rat infestations. As a result, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee withdrew its recommendation to the Executive.

Councillor Hales proposed the report as laid out.

**Recommended** to Council that

- (1) the Fees and Charges proposals set out in Appendix A to the report, to operate from 2 January 2020 unless stated otherwise, be approved; and
- (2) provided the changes proposed by Everyone Active to the core products and prices from January 2020 are within the September RPI, authority be delegated to the Heads of Culture and Finance, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holders (Cllrs Grainger and Hales), to accept the changes.

(The Portfolio Holder for this item was Councillor Hales)  
Forward Plan Reference 1,046

## 50. **Public and Press**

**Resolved** that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below.

Minute Nos.	Para Nos.	Reason
60	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

The item below was considered in confidential session and the full details of these were included in the confidential minutes of this meeting.

### **Part 1**

(Items for which a decision by the Council was required)

#### **60. Affordable housing purchase – Spring Lane, Radford Semele**

The Executive considered a confidential report from Housing recommending that the Council purchased 26 affordable homes on the Local Plan-allocated site at Spring Lane in Radford Semele for retention as Housing Revenue Account assets.

The Finance & Audit Committee noted the report and that the scheme was self-funding.

For the sake of clarity, the Committee requested a report at its next meeting to confirm the number of new Council houses, purchased or constructed since 2015, the cost of these and the money available within the HRA budget for such projects. The report should also detail the number of house types (i.e. social, affordable, or shared ownership) within each scheme.

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee also took the opportunity to thank Mr Bruno for his work with the Council and wished him well for the future.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report and recommended that the Council determined the costs involved to improve the EPC energy rating to category A. The Executive were required to vote on this because it formed a recommendation to them.

Members thanked the Scrutiny Committees for their comments and accepted the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The recommendations in the report were approved for consideration by Council on 20 November 2019.

(The Portfolio Holder for this item was Councillor Matecki)  
Forward Plan Reference 1,066

(The meeting ended at 7.21pm)