

**Committee:** Finance & Administration

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 25 March 2010

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**Title:** Pricing & Concessions Policy

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Item for decision

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### Summary

1. In January 2010, Committees approved their fees & charges for the year 2010/11. In the absence of a detailed policy on the setting of fees & charges, the following principle, as stated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, was followed: "The Council will maximise its income and will increase its fees and charges annually by at least the rate of inflation except where legal requirements, contractual obligations, market forces or other special circumstances would render this inappropriate."
2. It is recognised that the Council requires a more detailed policy, to ensure greater transparency and consistency in the setting of charges and the application of concessions. Developing a policy in this area has been recommended by the Scrutiny Committee.
3. The Strategic Management Board and Administration have discussed this matter and intend to consult on a new Pricing & Concessions Policy during 2010, with a view to implementing it from April 2011.

### Recommendations

4. The Committee is recommended to:
  - a) Agree the principles to be consulted upon, as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report
  - b) Agree the consultation process, as detailed in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the report.

### Background Papers

None.

### Impact

Communication/Consultation	A proposed consultation process is detailed in the report.
Community Safety	No specific implications.
Equalities	An equalities impact assessment will be carried out as part of developing a policy.

Finance	A financial analysis will be carried out as part of developing a policy.
Health and Safety	No specific implications.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No specific implications.
Sustainability	No specific implications.
Ward-specific impacts	No specific implications.
Workforce/Workplace	No specific implications.

### Principles to be consulted upon

5. Based on discussions between the Strategic Management Board and the Administration, and comments received from Members, the proposed principles to be consulted upon as part of developing the new policy are as follows:
- a) The policy shall apply to all prices and concessions that the Council has discretion to set.
  - b) Car park charges shall be a known exemption to the policy, and will be the subject of separate detailed consideration.
  - c) There shall be consistency in the way charges are calculated and concessions are applied.
  - d) The full cost of the service, including an element for corporate overheads, will be the starting point for calculating charges.
  - e) Where alternative service providers are available, market forces will be taken into account when calculating charges.
  - f) Any subsidy of the full cost of the service, including an element of corporate overheads, will be made clear and be a conscious decision designed to meet service objectives.
  - g) Concessions of 25% will be applied to individuals in receipt of UDC-administered benefits.
  - h) There will be no automatic concessions for elderly or disabled customers.
  - i) Where possible, income shall be collected in advance of the service being provided.
  - j) The responsible Committee may authorise exceptions to the policy where there are sound business reasons to do so, after taking into account advice of the relevant service manager and the Chief Finance Officer.

6. The above is a proposed statement of principles for consultation purposes and does not indicate a pre-determination of policy. Consultation responses, equalities impact analysis and financial analysis will inform policy development.
7. Pest control charges for 2010/11 have already been set with no automatic concessions for over 65s. The Community & Housing Committee (January 2010) agreed that 'the effect of removing the concessions to those aged 65 and over, in terms of hardship, be monitored during the year 2010/11'. This monitoring will inform development of the corporate policy.
8. It is envisaged that the consultation and analysis work will be completed in time for a proposed policy to be brought back to this Committee in September, in time to inform 2011/12 fees & charges review and budget setting.

### Consultation

9. Members were invited to comment on these principles, through the Members Bulletin issued on 4 December 2009 and reminders at Committees in January. Three responses were received and the comments have been taken into account in preparing this report.
10. It is proposed that a consultation be carried out in the pages of Uttlesford Life magazine (to be published in May 2010) and on the Council's website.
11. In addition, it is proposed that the following organisations be consulted:
  - All town & parish councils in Uttlesford
  - Uttlesford Futures Economic Development Group
  - Council for Voluntary Service Uttlesford
  - Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services
  - Age Concern

### Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The Council is not maximising income from fees & charges	3	2	Implement corporate policy
Concessions are not applied consistently or on the basis of greatest need.	3	2	Implement corporate policy

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact  
 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.  
 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required  
 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.