

Committee: Scrutiny

Agenda Item

Date: 14 April 2009

7

Title: Review of fees and charges: Update from Scrutiny Working Group

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Item for
decision

Summary

- 1 A small working group is undertaking a piece of work relating to the various fees and charges made by the Council – with particular reference to ensuring equality of treatment in concessionary charging.
- 2 This report provides an update of the work undertaken since the last meeting of the Committee. The Working Group has received some information from other councils regarding their approach to the subject and has also met representatives of appropriate voluntary organisations to discuss the approach to concessions.
- 3 Councillor Sadler has indicated that he is no longer able to serve on the group and the Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to nominate a replacement.

Recommendations

To note the report ; and to consider whether to appoint an additional member to the Working Group.

Background Papers

None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Some charges are subject to statutory requirements regarding consultation. The working group intends to undertake consultation in reviewing the Council's approach to concessions.
Community Safety	None specific
Equalities	Concessions should meet requirements for equality.
Finance	Fees and charges provide an important part of the Council's income.
Human Rights	None specific

Legal implications	The level of charges for some services is subject to statutory provisions.
Sustainability	Some services for which charges are made have an impact on sustainability.
Ward-specific impacts	District wide
Workforce/Workplace	None specific

Situation

- 4 At its last meeting, the Committee agreed that the Working Group should work towards:
 - The development of a pricing and concessions policy
 - Benchmarking information from a selection of authorities of a similar type and nature to Uttlesford
 - Consultation with representatives of appropriate voluntary sector organisations.
- 5 Examples of policies adopted by other councils are being sought and will help to provide the basis for a draft policy which will be submitted to the Committee.
- 6 Benchmarking information is being sought from other district councils. The response to date has been rather disappointing, but should provide a useful indicator of the approach adopted elsewhere.
- 7 A consultation meeting with representatives of appropriate voluntary organisations in the district was held on 2 April. Some useful comments were raised at the meeting and will be considered by the working group.
- 8 Councillor Sadler has indicated that he is no longer able to serve on the group, which leaves just two members (Councillors Alan Dean and Lesley Wells). The Working Group hopes to be in a position to report its findings to the Committee in the summer. The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to nominate a replacement for Councillor Sadler, or whether the remaining work should be left to the other two members of the group.

Update from Fees and Charges Working Group
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Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The Council fails to ensure equality of treatment in its fees and charges	2 There is a need to address current shortcomings	2 The Council would fail to meet requirements on equality	Action proposed in this report and implementation of final recommendations in due course
Arbitrary removal of concessions raises public concern	1 The working group proposes an open and measured approach to the review	2 Loss of public confidence in the approach to fees and charges	Open and transparent public engagement

- 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.