

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

16th January 2008

7.45pm

Committee Room 3, Town Hall

6. Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group: Progress Report

Members:

Councillor MacMillan (Chair), Councillor Fry (Vice-Chair), and Councillors Chalk, Clayton, Cookson, Hicks, Hill, and Passingham.

Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer:

Jess Bayley

Interim Recommendations:

1. We recommend that no changes should be made to Officer's proposals regarding Land Charges;
2. We recommend that, apart from the one area mentioned below, no changes should be made to Officer's proposals regarding the charges levied by the Planning Service; and
3. We recommend that no changes should be made to Officer's proposals regarding the fees and charges levied by the Council's fitness suites.

Summary:

The Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group continues to investigate the fees and charges levied by Redditch Borough Council. In line with the contents of the original scoping document, we are assessing the contribution that charging can make to funding efficiency; changes which could contribute to the Council's strategic effectiveness; and the impact that any changes might have on use of Council services. We are aware that local authority powers to charge are affected by a requirement that a fee or charge for a service should not exceed the costs involved in delivering that service.

We recognise that this is a long-term, strategic exercise which is likely to continue into the next municipal year. To ensure that the opportunities we identify can be considered at moments that are opportune for the Council, rather than at the end of the long term exercise, we will produce interim recommendations on an ongoing basis.

At the start of the review we agreed to scrutinise the Council's fees and charges on a service by service basis. To date, we have reviewed the fees and charges levied by the Planning Service, Land Charges and the Council's fitness suites (within Leisure Services).



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

16th January 2008

7.45pm

Committee Room 3, Town Hall

We have identified that the pre-application service provided by Officers within Planning Services, which is currently provided free of charge to customers, may be suitable for review. We will be considering whether to recommend that a charge is introduced for the provision of this service at a meeting on the 17th January 2008. However, we have concluded that no further recommendations can be made in relation to the Planning Service and Land Charges. This was agreed on the basis that the majority of fees and charges within those service areas are set at a statutory level which leaves us no flexibility to recommend change.

We reviewed the fees and charges levied by the fitness suites at a recent meeting. The fitness suites provide a discretionary service which means that the Council has the flexibility to alter related fees and charges. However, the data we considered in relation to the fitness suites demonstrated that the Council was operating these services in accordance with an effective pricing strategy. We, therefore, recommend that no changes be made to the fees and charges levied by the fitness suite.

We have, however, requested further information on usage patterns and may bring forward some proposals later in the year

Conclusion:

We ask that the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and approve our recommendations.