

Fees and Charges Policy
February 2023

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council provides a wide range of services to the residents and businesses in Stroud District. Some of these services are statutory and must be provided by the Council, but others are discretionary.
- 1.2 Councils are able to provide additional, non statutory, services and charge for these services under the Local Government Act 2003. This includes any enhancements to statutory services.
- 1.3 Charging is an important function. The level of fees and charges can influence the way in which services are used, for example by promoting access to certain services or to help prevent wasteful use of a service.
- 1.4 It is also a significant source of income that supports the delivery of the services. If the Council were to reduce or stop charges for services it would not have the resources to continue providing all of the services it currently offers.
- 1.5 A policy gives a framework under which fees and charges are set. It ensures that all services adhere to the same procedures when setting charges to have a consistent approach to charges across all council services.
- 1.6 Fees and charges do not include the following areas. These charges will be set and approved outside the Fees and Charges policy.
 - Council Tax
 - Business Rates
 - Housing rents and service charges
 - Property rents and service charges

2. Fees and Charges Policy

- 2.1 Fees and charges will be put in place to provide the best overall value for residents, businesses and the community. This will mean that some services will be charged at a commercial rate, whereas others will be subsidised to encourage their use. Where statutory charges are in place, these will be included at the statutory rate.
- 2.2 Where possible income will be maximised to contribute towards service delivery. This does not, however, mean that the cost of all services will be fully charged as this may not be appropriate in all service areas.
- 2.3 It is the responsibility of the Service Manager to set the fees and charges for their services, ensuring that they are fixed at the correct level and approved appropriately. Where relevant benchmarking against other councils or providers will be undertaken.
- 2.4 Fees and charges will be put forward for approval by Council, or by the relevant Committee under delegated authority.

3. Charging Policy

3.1 Fees and charges will be set using the following charge types:

Charge Type	Detail
Statutory	Fees are set by Government and are to be charged at the statutory rate
Commercial	Fees set in line with other providers, influenced by market forces
Full Cost Recovery	Fees set based on recovering the full cost of providing the service
Subsidised	Fees set at below the cost of providing the service, meaning part of the service is funded by other council income such as Council Tax and Business Rates
Nominal	Fees set at a nominal fee, meaning most of the service is funded by other council income such as Council Tax and Business Rates.
Free	Fees not charged. All of the service is funded by other council income such as Council Tax and Business Rates

4. Discount and Concessions

- 4.1 Sometimes discounts or concessions are made available on services. This could be to ensure that everybody has access to a service, or to provide some services at a reduced cost to certain groups to encourage the use of the service.
- 4.2 The fees and charges papers will include where discounts or concessions are in place.

5. Review

- 5.1 Unless otherwise stated, fees and charges will be reviewed annually, with the default assumption that all fees and charges be increased by the rate of inflation as determined by the Section 151 Officer.
- 5.2 Where uplifts have been implemented below inflation rates in previous years, increases above the current rate of inflation may be applied to bring charges back in line with inflation, if appropriate.
- 5.3 Service Managers are expected to review all fees and charges and have discretion to deviate from this base position of inflationary uplifts. The review should take into consideration the cost of providing the service, inflationary uplifts, as well as service information and knowledge on market conditions or the impact of fee charges on service users. This will also include a review of any discounts and concessions.
- 5.4 Fees and Charges are to be reported to Committees and Council in line with the Budget Setting process. Where necessary consultation periods should also be adhered to.

- 5.5 New fees will generally be implemented from 1 April each year.
- 5.6 This review does not mean that all fees and charges will change annually, as some may remain the same as the previous year.
- 5.7 Where appropriate benchmarking and an Equalities Impact Assessment will be also undertaken by the service manager.
- 5.8 There may be instances where fees and charges need to be amended outside the annual process, for example a significant change in the cost of providing the service, or changes beyond the control of the Council eg a change in the VAT rate. Where possible any additional changes will follow the same process as the annual review.