

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 2 JULY 2008

CROSS CUTTING REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S POLICIES ON CHARGING FOR SERVICES

Report by Chief Executive

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet on the arrangements for undertaking a cross-cutting review of the Council's policies on charging for services and to seek agreement in respect of the remit and associated timescales for reporting on the matter.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 24 January 2008, Cabinet considered and approved the report on the outcomes from the Strategic Review of the Revenue Budget exercise and requested a further report on proposals for a cross-cutting review of the Council's policies on charging for services. This report sets out details of how this review will be carried out and proposes dates for the completion of key stages of this review.

3. REVIEW PROPOSALS

- 3.1 It is proposed that a short-term officer working group, led by the Head of Leisure Services and supported by senior officers from all services is established, with a remit to:
- i. establish best practice nationally, in relation to charging for services;
 - ii. research, document and assess and report on revisions needed to modernise the Council's current charging policies, taking due cognisance of any statutory responsibilities resting with the Council; and
 - iii. make proposals for implementing the working group's recommendations.
- 3.2 The review will cover a wide range of issues including (but not restricted to):
- i. setting charges that support the Council's key values and vision, and departmental service plans;
 - ii. setting charges that optimise both use and income;
 - iii. arrangements for service user feedback, including consultation on charges;
 - iv. predicting and addressing, with greater accuracy, the impact of increasing charges on the use made of services;
 - v. identifying new opportunities to introduce charges and/or raise income;
 - vi. benchmarking charges with other councils and where appropriate, other service providers;

- vii. providing price concessions and subsidies based on a corporate and equitable approach;
- viii. making recommendations on whether modification of charges is appropriate at local level; and
- ix. forming a view on whether cost recovery for chargeable services is a significant issue, making recommendations as appropriate.

3.3 A detailed workplan for this review will be considered by Corporate Management Team on 28 July, with outline findings and recommendations considered by 24 September. The final recommendations will be submitted to Corporate Management Team on 12 November, in advance of consideration by Cabinet on 19 November. This timescale will allow the findings and recommendations of the review to inform the budget planning process for 2009/10 and beyond.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications attached to the report at this time. The report does, however, respond to a key action around the Council's overall policy on charging for services, as discussed during the Council's 2008/09 budget setting process. Completion of this review will provide the Council with a further level of assurance that it is able to secure demonstrated Best Value in relation to charging for Council services.

5. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 A modern approach to charging for Council services will contribute positively to East Ayrshire's overall vision of providing local people with high quality services and opportunities, which are sustainable, accessible, and which meet people's needs.

6. LEGAL AUTHORITY / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The review will take due cognisance of any statutory responsibilities resting with the Council around the wider issue of charging for services. Any new policy recommendations arising from the review will be reported to Cabinet in due course.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to approve:-

- (i) the remit of the cross-cutting review as outlined in this report; and
- (ii) the timescale for the key stages of the review as detailed in this report.

Fiona Lees
Chief Executive
FL/JS
25 June 2008

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

Implementation officer – john.griffiths@east-ayrshire.gov.uk