

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Liz Richardson, Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning	
DECISION DATE:	On or after 18th June 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2866
TITLE:	Housing Services Charging Policy 2016	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1: Housing Services Charging Policy 2016		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Housing Services provide statutory and non-statutory services where reasonable costs can be recovered. The Housing Services Charging Policy, adopted in 2014, details which services are subject to a charge and how the charges will be calculated and recovered. This policy is being updated and includes new and revised charges.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Housing Services Charging Policy, attached in Appendix 1, is adopted.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 Housing Services currently charge fees to recover the reasonable costs of providing a number of enabling, enforcement, licensing, housing register and homelessness services.
- 3.2 The fees include charges to private landlords for administering both the mandatory and additional HMO license schemes and providing discretionary property inspections, to housing developers for work associated with the delivery of affordable housing and to housing associations for marketing vacant accommodation.
- 3.3 The attached Charging Policy 2016 sets out uplifted and new charges following a review of costs and chargeable services. The statutory charging regime for HMO licensing precludes the Council making a surplus and as such is designed to recover the cost of administering the scheme. Similarly the other charges have been set at recovering some, or all, of our expenditure, rather than attempting to make a surplus. Given the nature of the work associated with the new charges it is difficult to predict with any accuracy what the additional income will be.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The legislative framework to support the Charging Policy is contained in the following Acts of parliament:
 - a) Housing Act 2004 – power to recover costs associated with the administration of HMO licensing and housing conditions enforcement activity
 - b) Housing Act 1996 - power to establish Nomination Agreements and the recovery of costs associated with the provision of temporary accommodation
 - c) Local Government Act 2003 – general power to charge for discretionary services

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Housing Services currently charge fees which aim to recover the costs of providing a number of enabling, enforcement, HMO licensing, housing register and homelessness services.
- 5.2 The fees for these services were set in a Charging Policy 2014 and, at that time, were considered to be conservative estimates of the actual cost of service provision.
- 5.3 Following a review of the cost of providing services, which compared costs with those charged by other local authorities and comparative charges for officer hourly rates, it is now proposed to make the following increases to the charges set in 2014:
 - hourly rate of enforcement actions from £32 per hour to £50 per hour
 - delivery of affordable housing from £530 to £550 per unit

- marketing of affordable housing from £45 to £62.50 per property.
- standard fee for licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation from £600 to £700 per property
- Late fee for licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation from £780 to £900 per property to reflect actual costs.

5.4 Similarly, following a review of chargeable services it is now proposed to charge for the provision of discretionary property inspection services. These services are provided to private landlords and include non statutory property inspection advice for immigration clearance and energy performance certification which will be charged at the revised rate of £50 per hour.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The rationale of the uplifted and new charges is supported by the following principles. Firstly, that it is either a statutory requirement or reasonable to make the charge. Secondly, that the costs are set at recovering some, or all, of our expenditure associated with the activity rather than making a surplus. Finally that the charges are articulated in a policy that is clear, accurate and freely available.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Given the nature of the policy only limited and informal consultation has been undertaken. It includes recent consultation with Registered Providers with whom we work in partnership to deliver and market affordable housing to be confident that the revised charges for these services are reasonable. We also know, from the extensive consultation on the additional HMO licencing scheme, that in general landlords support a more pro-active approach to recharging, so that landlords in default were subject to higher charges.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	Graham Sabourn, Head of Housing (01225 477949)
Background papers	None
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