

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Paul Myers, Cabinet Member for Economic & Community Regeneration	
DECISION DATE:	On or after 28th July 2018	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3078
TITLE:	Housing Services Charging Policy 2018	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1: Housing Services Charging Policy 2018		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Housing Services provide statutory and non-statutory services where reasonable costs can be recovered. The Housing Services Charging Policy, the most recent version of which was adopted in 2016, details which services are subject to a charge and how the charges will be calculated and recovered. This policy has been updated and includes 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 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.
- 3.4 The income generated from charges is budgeted for within existing budgets; this proposal will enable these budgets, and strategic review savings, to be achieved. There is no change to the cost resource requirements from these proposals, which are also included within existing budgets.

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 current fees for these services are detailed in the Housing Services Charging Policy 2016. Following a review of the cost of providing services it is proposed to make the following changes:
 - Increase the charge to Registered Providers for the marketing of affordable housing to £79 per unit (up from £62.50 in 2016).
 - Revised HMO licencing fee structure which includes an increased standard fee of £795 (up from £700) but with significant discounts available for on-line applications and renewals. The late application surcharge of £200 remains the same with an option to charge for missed appointments.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The rationale of the uplifted 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 The HMO licensing fee was considered as part of the recent consultation on the proposal to extend Additional HMO Licensing. Overall, 63% of the respondents thought the proposed fee of £800 was reasonable, although this figure dropped to 32% when the view of landlords alone was considered. Informal consultation has also taken place 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.

8.2 Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have had opportunity to review & input into this report.

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. The Equalities Impact Assessment relating to the previous Charging Policy (2014) has also been reviewed and no significant adverse impacts were identified.

Contact person	Graham Sabourn, Head of Housing (01225 477949)
Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	