

Fees and Charges Pricing Policy

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1. Introduction

Shropshire Council delivers a wide range of services to our residents, communities, and businesses. Many of these services are free at the point of delivery, but some attract a fee or charge.

This policy sets out a consistent approach for setting, reviewing, and managing fees and charges across the Council. Its purpose is to ensure that charges are:

Fair and transparent for service users

Aligned with our corporate priorities and statutory duties

Set at a level that supports the financial sustainability of services

Applied consistently across the organisation

Shropshire Council is at an early stage in its journey to financial sustainability. This policy is therefore designed to be practical, supportive, and easy to use, giving services the tools and guidance they need to make good decisions about charging.



By setting appropriate levels of fees and charges for services the Council can help:

- Improve financial resilience
- Improve transparency of charges and their basis
- Reduce subsidisation of service delivery through Council Tax or government funding
- Fund service improvements and innovation
- Manage demand for non-essential services
- Target subsidy where needed

By careful consideration of fees and charges the Council can also avoid:

- Affordability and access concerns for people and households we regard as vulnerable
- Market sensitivity risk
- Legal and reputation risk through non-compliance
- Administrative complexity and inefficiency
- Cross subsidisation of service costs

To achieve this the Council must:

- Adopt a commercially minded culture while retaining public service values
- Have strong accountability from staff for all fees and charges
- Encourage benchmarking, consultation and adaptability
- Embed continuous improvement and learning

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1. Purpose

To provide a clear framework for:

Setting new fees and charges

Reviewing existing charges

Deciding when and how subsidies or concessions are applied

Ensuring charges are affordable, fair, and legally compliant

2.2. Scope

This policy applies to:

Discretionary services where the Council has the power to set a fee or charge locally



Statutory services where local discretion exists on the level of charge

All additional services provided beyond statutory requirements

This policy does not apply to:

Commercial trading undertaken through Council-owned companies

Contracted services to other public bodies under the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970

Rental income

Services charged under the Care Act 2014 (covered by separate policy)

Car parking charges

3. Key Principles

1. **Cost Recovery as Default** – Users of discretionary services should normally pay the full cost of the service, unless a subsidy is approved for policy reasons.
2. **Transparency** – Charges and the reasons behind them should be clear to service users and decision-makers.
3. **Affordability and Accessibility** – Fees must not create unnecessary barriers, and concessions should be targeted to those who most need them.
4. **Consistency** – Similar services should be charged on the same basis across the Council.
5. **Regular Review** – All discretionary fees and charges should be reviewed at least annually, with changes linked to the budget cycle.
6. **Market Awareness** – Benchmarking against other councils and providers to ensure charges are competitive and justifiable.
7. **Legal Compliance** – All charges must be in line with statutory powers and restrictions.
8. **Value for Money** – Fees and charges should contribute to efficient, sustainable services.

4. Charging Categories

Reference	Category	Policy Objective	Typical Application
1	Full Cost Recovery	Cover all direct and indirect costs of the service.	Most discretionary services.
2	Full Cost Recovery with Concessionary Discounts	Ensure priority groups can access services while still recovering costs from other users.	Leisure, cultural, or wellbeing services.



3	Subsidised	Provide wider access for all users with a partial contribution from general funds.	Community engagement or early intervention services.
4	Nominal Charge	Make a service widely available while discouraging misuse.	Token fees for equipment hire.
5	Statutory	Charges set by law or central government.	Some Licensing, certain planning fees.

5. Setting and Reviewing Fees

5.1 Process

Identify Costs – Use available tools such as the Council's Cost Recovery Calculator to capture direct, departmental, corporate, and financial costs. **Select Charging Category** – Decide which of the five categories listed in Section 4 the charge will fall into. This will be largely based on the policy objectives to be met as set within the service area.

Benchmark – Compare with other local authorities, market providers or other considerations to ensure the fee level is appropriate

Impact Assessment – Carry out an ESHIA at timely stocktake points.

Approval – Ensure the appropriate authorisation is in place (for example Cabinet, Full Council, or delegated officer powers).

5.2 Review Frequency

There must be an annual review, as a minimum and in line with the agreed timetable.

In-year reviews should happen where costs or market conditions change significantly.

6. Concessions and Subsidies

Concessions should:

- Align with verifiable and approved corporate priorities

- Have clear, consistent qualifying criteria applied appropriately and effectively

- Be affordable and budgeted for at a service level

- Be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective

- Be fully documented and, if necessary, approved as appropriate



7. Exemptions

All services provided by the Council will be charged for unless prevented by statute, or where their use would have likely negative consequences in terms of the Council's compliance with the public sector equality duty, or under exceptional circumstances agreed exempt by the relevant Service Director, in consultation with the S151 Officer.

All concessions and exemptions must be supported by an Equality Impact Assessment

8. Governance and Responsibilities

Full Council approve the Fees and Charges Report annually. This report should include all fees and charges in place across the authority.

Cabinet or Full Council (as deemed necessary in consultation with the s151 Officer) will approve significant changes and new charging policies outside of the annual report.

Service Directors will ensure services comply with this policy.

Service Managers or other officers through a formal delegation, will maintain fee schedules, complete cost and impact assessments, undertake benchmarking and review annually.

The Finance Team/PMO Team will provide costing tools, training, and monitoring.

9. Delegation

Delegated authority to set and review fees and charges is essential for the effective management of the council's income streams. This policy grants delegated powers to specific officers, as outlined in the council's constitution, to ensure a transparent and efficient process for pricing decisions.

Part 8 of the Council's Constitution sets out the delegated authority to amend fees and charges within the year.

Any changes to the levels of fees and charges including the introduction of new charges resulting in a budget adjustment must be approved in line with the Council's Virement rules.

10. Consultation and Communication

The council, via the relevant service area, will consult service users where legally required or where significant impact is anticipated.



The Council will maintain a fees and charges schedule and publish all fees and charges on the Council's website and provide at least one month's notice before implementation where possible.

11. Collection and Administration

The Council will:

- Collect charges in advance wherever practical.
- Keep processes simple and user-friendly.
- Follow debt recovery procedures promptly where required.

12. Legislative Framework

This policy operates within the powers granted by:

- Local Government Act 2003 (Section 93)
- Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970
- Localism Act 2011
- Provision of Services Regulations 2009

This policy demonstrates compliance with the public sector equality duty placed upon us by operates within the powers granted by:

- Equality Act 2010

