

**BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE CHARGING POLICY 2021/22**

POLICY AIM

The aim of this policy is to provide a corporate framework for the setting of fees and charges for the services provided by Boston Borough Council. The policy shows the connection between charging for services and the council's objectives and aims to secure the delivery of services efficiently, effectively and at affordable levels; it also aims to strengthen financial management.

As the overall resources available to the Council are diminishing, it is important to ensure that the charging policy clearly sets out the ways that fees and charges will contribute to the continuation of services for residents, businesses and other consumers.

POLICY STATEMENT

- The Policy applies to all those fees and charges which the Council has discretion to set, regardless of whether the levels are approved by the Cabinet or any alternative Council reporting arrangement (for example Licensing Committee). Services where charges are decided externally will be set in line with the relevant national legal framework and will automatically be changed to reflect the latest position.
- We will identify the full costs of delivering services to make clear the level of subsidy the Council is providing.
- We will operate an effective and efficient collection system. The methods for paying charges will be made clear and the procedures for recovering fees will be governed by established Debt Recovery Procedures. The Council reserves the right to levy charges for the late payment of invoices.
- Reasonable notice will be given to service users before any new charge is implemented. Reasonable notice is defined as one calendar month.
- The effects any new charge has on service usage and income must be closely monitored over the first 12 months by the service manager.
- We will invest receipts from fees and charges in the improvement of the service, subject to statutory requirements and the wider corporate objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. A Service Manager may propose to invest receipts from fees and charges and will prepare a report to the Corporate Management Team identifying their full requirements for use of additional income in their service area.

Appendix 3

- All discretionary fees and charges will be set in line with the approved charging policy for that service and should fall into one of the categories in the following table.

Charging Strategy	Objective
Commercial charges	The council aims to cover the cost of providing the service and make a surplus
Full Cost Recovery	The council aims to recover the costs of providing this service from those who use it
Subsidised	The council wishes users of the service to make a contribution to the costs of providing it. This might be to meet a service objective or to allow competition with other providers
Free	The Council chooses to make the service available at no charge to meet a service objective
Statutory	Charges are determined in line with legal requirements.

- Fees and charges will be regularly reviewed within the Council's financial planning process, any variations outside of this will need formal approval by the Cabinet or Committee as appropriate. Service Managers will complete the corporate template for the review of fees and charges, these will form the bases for reports to the Cabinet or relevant committee, as part of the annual review of fees and charges.
- Increases in fees and charges will, each year, be generally in line with the level of inflation assumed in the budget process, subject to consideration of the specific issues in relation to each service. All changes will be agreed as part of the overall budget setting process.
- Wherever possible charges will be collected either in advance or at the point of service delivery. Where charges are to be collected after service delivery has started, invoices will be raised within 5 working days, and as necessary appropriate recovery procedures followed.
- The policy requires a comprehensive schedule of all fees and charges to be set up. Each Service Manager will maintain a schedule of fees and charges levied for their areas of responsibility. This schedule will be in a corporate format and should include, but identify separately, those charges that are nationally set. The format will be determined by the Accountancy Manager. There may be instances where, for commercial reasons, specific fees are not quoted on the schedule. Fees for these services will be on a "price on application" basis.

Appendix 3

- The Customer Services Manager will be able to refer to all fees and charges and these will be made available on the Authority's website.
- Charges should be easy to understand.
- Existing policies and procedures should be taken into account when setting fees and charges.
- Setting of fees and charges should be made in accordance with the current value added tax regulations. Where rates of VAT increase then fees and charges will automatically be adjusted upwards. Advice will be provided by the Accountancy team.
- As a general policy no concession is to be given from the charge set. However, it is open to service managers to present a case to the Cabinet arguing that a concession is appropriate for a particular group or that a concession would assist the achievement of the Council's Corporate Objectives.
- In accordance with business need fees and charges can be amended as agreed by the respective Portfolio Holder, Corporate Management Team member, Head of Service and the Section 151 Officer (or Deputy Section 151 Officer) in exceptional circumstances and reported to Cabinet retrospectively.

IMPLEMENTATION

Who is responsible?

Overall responsibility is with the Accountancy Manager and day-to-day operational responsibility with Service Managers.

Complaints procedure

If any member of the public believes that the Council has acted in a way that is not in line with this policy the Council's Formal Complaints Procedure may be followed.

Monitoring and review

The Accountancy Manager will review the implementation of this policy and undertake a triennial review of the policy.

Service Team Plans

All service team plans will be consistent with the principles within this policy.

Value for Money

The Council continually reviews its costs and charges to ensure that Value for Money is being delivered, and in determining next year's fees and charges, annual reviews will seek to challenge subsidies, determine the value placed on the service and how much people are willing to pay. They will also identify any new charges for services.

MONITORING

The policy will be monitored in the following ways:

MONITORING ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Data collection	Service Managers
Review of policy	Accountancy Manager
External communication	Customer Services Manager

CONSULTATION

Corporate Management Team and Cabinet were consulted on a draft version of the strategy before full implementation. Changes were made to the policy reflecting the outcomes of the consultation.