

INCOME MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

1st February 2023

Present: Councillor Jabbar Riaz in the Chair
Councillors Desayrah, Mackay (Vice-Chair),
Mitchell and Stephen

Officers: Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance
and Resources
David Sutton, Deputy Director – Policy and
Strategy

28 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

29 Declarations of Interest

None.

30 Public Participation

None.

31 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32 Website Advertising

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the use of advertising on the Council website. The Deputy Director - Corporate Policy and Strategy presented the report and explained that the Council implemented the Google AdSense service in October 2020. This report gave information of the controls in place and the income generated since that time. The Council had received approximately £3k over the last two calendar years, with almost £2k of that being generated in 2022.

In the ensuing discussion, a request was made for an update report to a future meeting on the Worcester app and advertising revenue opportunities.

Some Members expressed the view that the adverts do not enhance the Council's image. Furthermore, some visitors to the website will interpret them as advertising Council services. The Deputy Director advised that Officers have identified a handful of adverts which encouraged users to click on a link without making it clear that the link is part of an advert, and these were immediately removed. Adverts are monitored and the ability to respond quickly means that Officers are able to exclude any adverts that may give rise to concern.

It was noted that visitors to the Council website will only see adverts if they first accept cookies. It was suggested that this could be made clearer.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee note the content of this report.

33 Referral Report from Licensing and Environmental Health Committee 12th December 2022 - Proposal to Apply a Fees and Charges Exemption for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Electric Vehicles

The Sub-Committee considered a referral report from the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that, at its meeting on 12th December 2022, the Committee approved a proposal to incentivise the transition to electric hackney carriages and private hire vehicles through a fee and charge exemption for the period 2023/24-2025/26.

The financial impact of the scheme was the loss of up to £37,000 in licence fee income over the three-year period. As a one-off cost it was proposed that this is taken from the Taxi Reserve which currently contains £56,496. This proposal was considered and agreed by the Environment Committee at their meeting on 24th January 2023.

In the ensuing discussion, a question was raised as to whether hybrid vehicles can be included in the exemption. The Corporate Director advised that the Council is required to undertake a 28-day consultation process in respect of the current proposals. The consultation period is still open, and any proposed amendment should be submitted via the consultation. Furthermore, as this is a County-wide proposal, and change should be considered with the other districts.

Sub-Committee Members expressed support for the proposed exemption for electric vehicles, as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee approve the introduction of a Fee and Charge Exemption for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Electric Vehicles for the period 2023/24 – 2025/26.

34 Referral Report from Environment Committee 24th January 2023 - Draft Car Park Fees and Charges 2023/24

The Sub-Committee considered a referral report from the Environment Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that, at its meeting on 24th January 2023, the Committee considered the Draft Car Park Fees and Charges for 2023/24. A copy of the proposals was appended to the report. The Environment Committee recommended that the Draft Car Park Fees and Charges 2023/24, as set out in the report, be agreed and submitted to Council for approval.

It was noted that some Members had previously expressed their views on the proposals at the Environment Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee agree the Draft Car Park Fees and Charges 2023/24, as set out in the Appendix to the report, and recommend them to the Council for approval.

35 Referral Report from Communities Committee 25th January 2023 - Freedom Leisure Fees and Charges 2023/24

The Sub-Committee considered a referral report from the Communities Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that, at its meeting on 25th January 2023, the Communities Committee considered a report on the Management of the Freedom Leisure Contract for 2023/24, including the draft Freedom Leisure Fees & Charges 2023/24. A copy of the proposals was appended to the report.

The Communities Committee had agreed the proposals as set out in the report with the exception of the proposed Swim School Increases and Over 75 Annual Swim Pass fee, which the Committee recommended should be frozen.

The Corporate Director reported back on comments received from Freedom Leisure in response to the proposals from Communities Committee. In summary, there are currently 195 people using the Over 75 Swim Pass and the fee covers the full year. It has not increased for many years. The proposed fees for schools form part of Freedom Leisure's strategic approach nationally in order to keep in pace with cost increases, and the impact would amount to an additional £6,025.

Sub-Committee acknowledged Freedom Leisure's proposals are part of their strategic approach and concluded that they should be supported.

A comment was made that Freedom Leisure should consider raising their marketing profile.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree the draft Freedom Leisure Fees & Charges 2023/24, as set out in the Appendix to the report, and recommend them to Council for approval.

36 Proposed Fees and Charges 2023/24

The Committee considered a report on the proposed schedule of Fees and Charges for 2023/24. The Head of Finance presented the report and highlighted the main points. Proposed Fees and Charges for Building Control and some Licensing charges were set out in the exempt part of the agenda as they are commercially sensitive. Trade Waste charges would be available following publication of the new cost of waste disposal, which was expected shortly.

In summary, the review had been carried out with an assumption that the average increase should be 7.5%, which is line with the pay award for 2022/23. The publication of the CPI for November showed an annual increase of 10.7%. The financial impact of the changes proposed was an increase in budgeted income of £0.558m, which was reflected in the MTFP for 2023/24 and was only a 6.2% increase on total income from fees and charges. There were several revenue streams with fees that are statutory and are also some nil increases, including planning applications and gaming licences.

In response to questions, it was explained that the proposed increase in the charge for Annual Family Membership to the Commandery had been considered and agreed by the Joint Museums Committee.

The Head of Finance did not have any more detail on the take-up or rationale and he offered to provide more information following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee agree to recommend the proposed schedule of Fees and Charges for 2023/24 to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

37 Quarter 3 Performance Report For 2022/23

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 3 performance for Income Generation for 2022/23. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and highlighted a number of main points in respect of projects and actions. The Head of Finance commented on the key performance indicators. Officers responded to questions from Sub-Committee Members.

In response to question about income from electric vehicle charging, the Head of Finance stated that a report and analysis will be presented to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee note the Council's Quarter 3 performance for 2022/23.

38 Any Other Business

None.

39 Items Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.

40 Minutes (Exempt Items)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

41 Proposed Fees and Charges 2023/24 (Exempt Items)

The Sub-Committee considered the proposed fees and charges for Building Control and some Licensing charges which are classed as exempt items as they are commercially sensitive. The Sub-Committee agreed to recommend them to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 8.42p.m.