

Resources Management Team

17 December 2024

**Annual Review of Fees & Charges
2025/26 - Resources**



Report of Rob Davisworth, Head of Corporate Finance & Commercial Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update and seek approval from Resources Management Team with regards to the 2025/26 proposed fees and charges for the Resources service grouping.

Executive summary

- 2 The report sets out the proposed fees and charges for Resources for 2025/26 effective from 1 April 2025.
- 3 Service managers have considered fees and charges for their individual service areas and where appropriate increased non-statutory charges in line with the Council's MTFP for next year. All amendments to non-statutory charges have been agreed with the Head of Service.

Recommendation(s)

- 4 It is recommended that Resources Management Team approve the fees and charges for 2025/26 in the schedules attached at Appendices 2 and 3. The impact of these proposals will be built into the budget next year.

Background

- 5 The Constitution provides delegated powers to each Corporate Director, in consultation with their respective Portfolio Holders to introduce, review or amend fees and charges.
- 6 Fees and charges should be reviewed at least annually and adjusted where appropriate. Increases in fees and charges are necessary to take into account current and future pressures on budgets and the need to achieve Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings through maximising service income, as well as reducing expenditure. However, the difficult economic climate means that careful consideration must be given to increasing prices in all discretionary generating areas, to ensure they are affordable, equitable and sustainable.
- 7 In accordance with the MTFP model an inflationary increase of 3% was included for pay inflation and 1.7% for all other budgets. It is for service groupings to decide how this inflation is applied to the charges. Some fees are determined by outside bodies and some elements of discretionary fees have other restrictions imposed that limit the services discretion to amend the fee level.
- 8 A significant part of Resources service grouping income is derived from Service Level Agreements (SLAs). These agreements and fees are negotiated directly with external clients or via negotiations with 'groups' (e.g. schools). The agreements take into account reciprocal working agreements and specific market considerations. Income can be received as a "one-off" charge or through an ongoing contractual payment. The charges will be set when the service agreement is made. Details of unit charges included in the Services to Schools SLA brochure are included at Appendix 2. In general, these fees and charges have been increased by 5% from 2024/25. However, in some instances, increases are higher in order to cover costs or to reduce income shortfalls against budgets due to the academisation of schools.
- 9 The remaining income comes from charges for specific services provided and agreed fee levels need to be determined for these services. The service areas are
 - Occupational Health services to businesses at rates that take account of market conditions, with reduced rates applying for other non-commercial bodies, such as Town & Parish Councils;
 - Transactional and Customer Services – the Revenues and Benefits service levy a charge on council tax and NNDR taxpayers to recover costs of court action taken to obtain payment. The charge is in two parts, the first on issue of a summons and the second on issue of a liability order. Other

charges are made for administration of care fees charged under the Care Act 2014.

Strategic Context

- 10 The principle aims of the Council's Fees & Charges Policy are to support future budget processes and to provide a framework for Durham County Council's approach to charging for services. The Policy, which was developed pre-LGR and adopted by CMT, is built around the following key principles:
- (a) Develop an entrepreneurial approach so that charges whether new or reviewed are properly considered and consistent.
 - (b) Compliance with the Local Government Act 2003, which gives wide general powers to provide and charge for "discretionary services".
 - (c) Adherence to the financial duty to ensure income does not exceed cost.
 - (d) Charges may be set so that different people are charged different amounts and in different areas to satisfy local needs and objectives (a service can also continue to be free).
 - (e) The income derived from charging will normally be used to offset the costs of providing the service being charged for, including support service costs.
- 11 Further to this policy, the Localism Act 2011 gave all Council's a General Power of Competence (GPC), which provides the ability to charge for discretionary services on a cost recovery basis, and this should also inform the Council's approach to fees and charges
- 12 As a general principle, all proposals put forward to alter charges must be affordable, equitable and sustainable. These principles have been applied with regards to price increases throughout this report.

Statutory / Regulatory & Discretionary Charges

- 13 The Council can charge for certain statutory services, with the fee being determined by the Council, in accordance with regulatory restrictions to ensure no "undue profit" is being generated from the charging policy applied.
- 14 Other fees and charges are set at the discretion of the Council, with only reputational and market conditions being a factor in the decision on the charge that is appropriate. The attached schedule at Appendix 3

details the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26, including increases from 2024/25, and these are considered in more detail below.

HR & Employment Services

- 15 The main income stream is derived from a range of charges for specific Occupational Health, Payroll and HR advisory services. These charges have been reviewed and are detailed at Appendix 2 and 3. It is worth noting that some of the fees for 2025/26 will be priced on application rather than set in advance due to external costs fluctuating significantly throughout the year.
- 16 The 2023/24 outturn and the forecast for 2024/25 compared to the budgets are shown in the following table.

23/24 Outturn	Description	24/25 Budget	24/25 Q2 Outturn
	Advice and Guidance		
(260,352)	Schools SLA	(370,072)	(249,301)
(138,257)	Other SLAs	(68,649)	(79,987)
(398,609)	Total Advice and Guidance	(438,721)	(329,288)
	Payroll & Employee Services		
(568,211)	Schools SLA	(744,824)	(574,839)
(358,284)	Other SLAs	(362,910)	(402,973)
(1,533)	Other Fees and Charges	(1,000)	(863)
(928,028)	Total Payroll & Employee Services	(1,108,734)	(978,675)
	Occupational Health		
(80,704)	Schools SLA	(127,689)	(101,946)
(96,425)	Other SLAs	(172,324)	(208,447)
(11,836)	Other Fees and Charges	(11,836)	(11,836)
(188,965)	Total Occupational Health	(311,849)	(322,229)
(1,515,602)	Total HR & Employee Services	(1,859,304)	(1,630,192)

Transactional and Customer Services – Revenues and Benefits – Court Costs

- 17 In pursuing outstanding council tax and NNDR the Council sometimes has to access the courts system to secure settlement of the outstanding council tax and NNDR. The additional costs incurred are recovered by 'court costs' charges levied to those cases being pursued via the courts. These charges are added to their outstanding debt.
- 18 The court cost charge is discretionary and determined by the County Council. Regulation 34(7) of the Council Tax (Administration and

Enforcement) Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No.613) state that a court, when granting a liability order, shall make an order reflecting the aggregate of the outstanding council tax and "a sum of an amount equal to the costs reasonably incurred by the applicant in obtaining the order. These costs were challenged in court and the implications of the judgement was that every local authority should review its procedures for seeking court costs to ensure the amount requested reflected the actual costs incurred by the local authority, limiting them to the summons and liability order application.

- 19 The court cost fee is chargeable in two stages - at issue of summons and then at liability order stage. The current charges are for £53.20 at summons stage, with a further £41.80 levied at liability order stage, giving a gross total court cost fee (both stages) of £95. These charges were increased from £90 on 1 June 2024 and it is therefore proposed that they remain at £95 for 2025/26.
- 20 The fees associated with debt collection by enforcement agents (bailiffs) are prescribed within legislation and therefore non-negotiable. They are charged directly to the customer by the enforcement agents and collected by them.
- 21 The 2023/24 outturn and the forecast for 2024/25 compared to the budgets are shown in the following table.

23/24 Outturn	Description	24/25 Budget	24/25 Outturn
(2,000,265)	Court Fees - Council Tax	(1,857,000)	(1,857,000)
(60,920)	Court Fees - NNDR	(55,000)	(55,000)
(2,061,185)	Total	(1,912,000)	(1,912,000)

Transactional and Customer Services - Deputy and Appointee Service

- 22 The Deputy and Appointee team act as the Corporate appointee when appointed by the Department for Works and Pensions for those residents who do not have the mental capacity to look after their own affairs and have nobody else able to take on the role. The current charges are £5.20 per week for those residents in residential care and £7.80 per week for those residents living in the community. This charge applies only for those service users who meet the required capital limit. This is to be increased as at 1st April 2025 by 4% to match the inflationary increases in resource required to maintain this service (as detailed in Appendix 3).
- 23 The 2023/24 outturn and the forecast for 2024/25 compared to the budgets are shown in the following table.

23/24 Outturn	Description	24/25 Budget	24/25 Outturn
(392,653)	Financial Administration	(489,517)	(526,000)
(392,653)	Total	(489,517)	(526,000)

Procurement and Business Support – Blue Badge Service

24 A fee of £10 (the maximum permitted by legislation) is payable upon agreement that the service user qualifies for a Blue Badge. This covers the administrative cost of the application. Fast tracked Blue Badges for people with a terminal illness continue to be provided free of charge.

Background papers

- Resources Management Team Report (16 March 2024) – Annual Review of Fees & Charges 2024/25.

Other useful documents

- None

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The proposal in this report comply with the restrictions on charging applicable to the Council.

Finance

The financial impact of any price increases will be reflected in the revised income budgets for 2025/26.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The sensitive pricing of services, particularly in discretionary service areas, is essential in the current economic climate.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

The sensitivity of competition where discretionary charges are made.

Procurement

None.

Appendix 2: Schedule of Unit Charges for Schools SLAs 2025/26

The School SLAs below will have standard VAT added when external schools are charged, except for Occupation Health SLA which is nearly always Non-Vatable. The amounts below are exclusive of VAT.

Service	Basis of Charge	Nursery	PRU	Primary	Secondary	Special	Price Increase from 24-25
HR & Employment Services							
Human Resources (HR) Advisory Service	/School	1,215.40	1,215.40	1,215.40	1,215.40	1,215.40	5.00%
	/Pupil	3.07	3.28	3.07	2.78	3.28	5.14%
Payroll	/School	337.72	337.72	337.72	673.14	337.72	6.00%
	/Employee	108.28	108.28	108.28	108.28	108.28	6.00%
Occupational Health Service	/School	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	/Employee	20.79	20.79	20.79	20.79	20.79	4.00%
Procurement and Business Support							
Access to County Council Contracts & Purchasing Advice	/School	630.00	630.00	630.00	630.00	630.00	5.00%
	/Pupil	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	4.92%
Financial Support Service - Creditors	£ per school	481.93	562.07	482.98	1,602.72	562.07	5.00%
	£ per pupil	2.01	2.01	2.01	2.01	2.01	5.24%
	£ per residential place					13.38	5.02%
	Support service per half-day	102.23	102.23	102.23	102.23	102.23	5.00%
	Support service per day	191.65	191.65	191.65	191.65	191.65	5.00%
	Support service per hour	25.56	25.56	25.56	25.56	25.56	5.01%
Corporate Finance & Commercial Services							
Financial Advice and Information	£ per school	2,350.00	3,550.00	3,550.00	3,550.00	3,550.00	8.80%
Nursery Bursar	£ per school	6,550.00	-	-	-	-	7.91%
Long-term Staff Absence Insurance Scheme	£ per school	3,362.32	9,931.52	3,362.32	16,408.12	9,931.52	6.00%
	£ per employee	401.45	661.64	401.45	479.79	661.64	6.00%
Internal Audit & Insurance							
Internal Audit & Risk Management	£ per school	200.00	POA	350.00	400.00	POA	0.00%
Insurance	Insurance Cover	POA	POA	POA	POA	POA	N/A
	Insurance Fund	POA	POA	POA	POA	POA	N/A
Digital Services							
Admin Hardware	/School	212.67	283.37	283.37	518.67	283.37	5.00%
Repairs Service	/Pupil	N/A	0.16	0.16	1.75	0.16	6.67%

Service	Basis of Charge	Nursery	PRU	Primary	Secondary	Special	Price Increase from 24-25
	/ School 650GB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service	/ School 750GB	1,768.05	1,768.05	1,768.05	1,768.05	1,768.05	5.00%
(New Customers)	/ School 1TB	2,281.73	2,281.73	2,281.73	2,281.73	2,281.73	5.00%
	/ School 1.25TB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	/ School 1.5TB	3,307.94	3,307.94	3,307.94	3,307.94	3,307.94	5.00%
	/ School 2TB	4,334.15	4,334.15	4,334.15	4,334.15	4,334.15	5.00%
	/ School 2.5TB	5,360.36	5,360.36	5,360.36	5,360.36	5,360.36	5.00%
	/ School 3TB	6,386.56	6,386.56	6,386.56	6,386.56	6,386.56	5.00%
	/ School 3.5TB	7,412.77	7,412.77	7,412.77	7,412.77	7,412.77	5.00%
	/ School 4TB	8,438.98	8,438.98	8,438.98	8,438.98	8,438.98	5.00%
Portable Appliance	/School per item tested	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	3.16	1.94%
Testing Service	/Pupil	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Radiation Monitoring and Testing Service	/School (Non Durham LA Maintained Schools)	N/A	N/A	N/A	407.11	N/A	N/A
Remote Device Management Control Service	/School (only available to Schools purchasing the Curriculum Support Support)	671.31	671.31	671.31	671.31	671.31	0.00%
Shared Engineer Service	/School (Schools taking this service are strongly recommended to take the full ICT service (Hardware and Systems Services))	3,255.86	3,255.86	3,255.86	N/A	3,255.86	6.00%
Telephony Service	/School	On Request	On Request	On Request	On Request	On Request	N/A
Workshop Equipment	/School	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service	/Pupil	N/A	4.70	N/A	4.70	4.70	4.91%

Appendix 3: Schedule of Fees and Charges

Description		Actual Charge	Proposed Charge	Year on Year Increase	Year on Year Increase	VAT Code
		2024/2025 £	2025/2026 £	£	%	
Human Resources and Employee Services - Occupational Health						
1	Asbestos Workers Medicals (Licensed)	120.00	126.00	6.00	5.00%	E
	Asbestos Workers Medicals (Non Licensed)	100.00	105.00	5.00	5.00%	E
2	Health Surveillance					
	Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVs) Assessments					
	Initial or Baseline Assessment by Specialist Nurse Practitioner	48.00	49.50	1.50	3.13%	E
	Annual Postal Questionnaire by Specialist Nurse Practitioner	48.00	49.50	1.50	3.13%	E
	Clinical Assessment by Specialist Nurse Practitioner	67.00	70.50	3.50	5.22%	E
	Assessment by OH Physician	180.00	189.00	9.00	5.00%	E
	Further referral for standardised testing	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
	Hearing Conservation	67.00	70.50	3.50	5.22%	E
	Respiratory Health Surveillance	67.00	70.50	3.50	5.22%	E
	Skin Surveillance	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
	Further appointments with qualified Occupational Health Physician (MFOM)	131.00	137.50	6.50	4.96%	E
3	Fitness to Work Health Assessments					
	Pre-employment/Pre-placement Assessments	30.00	31.50	1.50	5.00%	S
	Night Worker Assessments	30.00	31.50	1.50	5.00%	E
	Further appointments with qualified Occupational Health Physician (MFOM)	180.00	189.00	9.00	5.00%	E
	Construction Plant Operator Fitness Medicals	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
	Confined Space Fitness Assessments	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
	Work Place Assessments	120.00 (plus Mileage Costs)	126.00 (plus mileage costs)	6.00	5.00%	S
4	Occupational Immunisation					
	Immunisations					
	Hepatitis B (Single Dose)	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
	Hepatitis A (Single Dose)	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
	Varicella (Per Dose)	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
	MMR (Priorix) (Per Dose)	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E

Description	Actual Charge	Proposed Charge	Year on Year Increase	Year on Year Increase	VAT Code
	2024/2025 £	2025/2026 £	£	%	
Influenza (Annual Dose)	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
5 Laboratory Blood Tests					
Hepatitis B	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Varicella	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Rubella	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Measles	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Gamma Interferon (Quantiferon Gold Test)	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
6 Other					
Case Management/Referrals - Occupational Health Physician (OHP)	240.00	252.00	12.00	5.00%	E
Case Management/Referrals - Occupational Health Nurse Adviser (OHNA)	120.00	126.00	6.00	5.00%	E
Physiotherapy Advice and Treatment	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Face-to-Face' Counselling and/or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Ill Health Retirement Applications	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Health Promotion Services	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Presentations/Training Modules	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
7 Non-Commercial Charges					
Charge to individual for medical records - centrally set fee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	OS
Charge to solicitor for medical records - centrally set fee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	OS
Charge to town and parish councils for each referral dealt with by doctor	104.00	109.50	5.50	5%	E
Charge to town and parish councils for each referral dealt with by doctor	208.00	218.50	10.50	5.05%	E
IRMP Pensions Opinion	Price on Application	Price on Application	N/A	N/A	E
Human Resources and Employee Services					
8 Training / Support activities					
Training for foster carers living in the Durham area (supported by other local authorities) (per participant per half day)	55.60	58.00	2.40	4.32%	OS
Training for staff of other Local Authorities / Partner organisations (per participant per half day)	55.60	58.00	2.40	4.32%	OS
Transactional and Customer Services - Revenues and Benefits					
9 Court Fees					

Description	Actual Charge	Proposed Charge	Year on Year Increase	Year on Year Increase	VAT Code
	2024/2025	2025/2026			
	£	£	£	%	
Issue of Summons	50.00	53.20	3.20	6.40%	OS
Liability Order	40.00	41.80	1.80	4.50%	OS
Transactional and Customer Services - Revenues and Benefits					
10 Care Act					
Admin. Fee – in Deferred Charging Policy					
- Initial Fee	206.00	214.00	8.00	3.88%	OS
- Annual Fee	54.00	56.00	2.00	3.70%	OS
[For Legal Fees - see CEO fees and charges]					
11 Court of Protection					
(set by the Public Guardianship Office)					
Category 1- for work involved in the application up to and including the date of the court order – per application	944.00	944.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Category II - Applications under sections 36 (9) or 54 of the Trustee Act 1925 or section 20 of the Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustees Act 1996 for the appointment of a new trustee in the place of 'P' and applications under section 18(1)(j) of the Mental	633.00	633.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Capacity Act 2005 for authority to exercise any power vested in P, whether beneficially, or as trustee, or otherwise					
Category III - Applications made under Practice Direction 9D paragraph 4 by an existing deputy. An amount not exceeding £633	633.00	633.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Category IV (1st Year) - Annual management fee where the court appoints a local authority deputy for property and affairs, payable on the anniversary of the court order	633.00	633.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Category IV (2nd and subsequent year) - Annual management fee where the court appoints a local authority deputy for property and affairs, payable on the anniversary of the court order	633.00	633.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
For Service users with assets less than £20,300 to charge an annual management fee not exceeding 3.5% - per year	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.00%	OS
Category V - Annual Property Management Fee	380.00	380.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Category VI - Preparation and lodgement of a report	274.00	274.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Category VII - Basic HMRC Income tax return etc	89.00	89.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
12 Miscellaneous Charges					
Travel rates	51.00	51.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Referrals to Treasury Solicitor-per case	350.00	350.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
13 Deferred Payments Scheme					
Interest Rate (to be maximum allowed) on balance owed – Reviewed on 1 January and 1 July each year.		Gilt rate + 0.15%			OS

Description	Actual Charge	Proposed Charge	Year on Year Increase	Year on Year Increase	VAT Code
	2024/2025	2025/2026			
	£	£	£	%	
Valuation Costs	150.00	175.00	25.00	16.67%	S
14 Deputy and Appointee Services					
Appointee service – residential care	5.20	5.41	0.21	4.04%	OS
Appointee service – community resident	7.80	8.11	0.31	3.97%	OS
Purchasing and Business Support					
15 Blue Badge Scheme					
Maximum fee permitted by legislation	10.00	10.00	0.00	0.00%	OS
Internal Audit and Risk Insurance - no relevant services (other than SLA services stated above)					
Digital Services - no relevant services (other than SLA services stated above)					

