

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11 JUNE 2014

FIFTH SCRUTINY REVIEW: CHARGING FOR SERVICES

REPORT BY DEPUTE DIRECTOR (THE ENVIRONMENT SERVICE)

ABSTRACT

This report outlines the scope of the fifth scrutiny review to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee. The purpose of the review is to examine the issues highlighted within Audit Scotland's Charging for Services Report by working together with officers and elected members to explore best practice and opportunities for improvement.

1 BACKGROUND/ MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 Scrutiny reviews are an important part of the work of the Scrutiny Committee. A decision on the topic area for review is based on the potential for the review to result in recommendations for change that will deliver measurable improvements. Topics for review may be identified by considering: audit reports; performance management reports; information gathered via surveys and feedback mechanisms; issues raised by representative groups e.g. community councils, resident groups and community groups; issues raised by partner organisations; complaints; and issues raised directly by the public.
- 1.2 To date the Committee has undertaken four reviews:
- Implementation of Grounds Maintenance Policy (findings reported to the Scrutiny Committee on 16 September 2009);
 - Integration of policy in respect of the More Choices, More Chances policy area (findings reported to the Scrutiny Committee on 23 February 2011);
 - Learning from complaints and customer feedback (findings reported to the Scrutiny Committee on 28 March 2012); and
 - Member Officer Groups (findings reported to the Scrutiny Committee on 27 November 2013).

2 PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee met on Friday 21 March 2014 to consider suggestions received for the Fifth Scrutiny Review and also to revisit the nominations received for the last review. A scoring system, as outlined within the Scrutiny handbook, was used for topic selection. As a result, it was agreed that the review should focus on charging for Services. The decision to review this area follows publication of Audit Scotland's Charging for Services Report which highlights the

importance of local authority charging. While charges for Services make up a relatively small part of the Council's income, they can be very significant to the people who use our Services.

- 2.2 Members of the Scrutiny Committee met on 7 April 2014 to discuss further the scope of the proposed review. The agreed scope and full terms of reference for the review is contained in Appendix 1 to this report.

3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's commitment to continuous improvement and effective challenge and scrutiny is reflected in the current remits of the themed committees, the Scrutiny Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Review of Charging for Services allows the Scrutiny Committee to further develop its overall approach to supporting continuous improvement across the Council.

- 3.2 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- I) Approves the content of this report, including the scope and terms of reference outlined in Appendix 1; and
- II) Agrees that a final report and findings from the review is submitted to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 3 December 2014.

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Appendix 1: Scope and terms of reference for the Fifth Scrutiny Review: Charging for Services

ANNEX

1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	
Community Plan/ Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1.1 Strategic implications

This report supports the delivery of the Strategic Objectives within Community Plan/ Single Outcome Agreement 2013-23 and Corporate Plan 2013-18.

1.2 Consultation

The Scrutiny Committee, Chief Accountant and Democratic Services Manager were consulted in the preparation of this report.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The background paper referred to within the report is:

[Charging for Services: Are you getting it right?](#) Audit Scotland, October 2014

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Scope and terms of reference for the Fifth Scrutiny Review of Charging for Services

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REVIEW OF CHARGING FOR SERVICES

SCOPE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background and Rationale

The Council's charging policy framework exists to ensure that the Council takes due cognisance of the impact of charging upon the demand for its Services. In addition it is intended that charges are periodically and comprehensively reviewed to ensure that the Council's income from charging is maximised.

The Scrutiny Committee's decision to review this area follows publication of Audit Scotland's Charging for Services Report which highlights the importance of local authority charging. While charges for Services make up **a relatively small** part of the Council's income, they can be very significant to the people who use our Services.

The purpose of the review is to examine the issues highlighted within Audit Scotland's report by working together with officers and elected members to explore best practice and opportunities for improvement.

Objectives of the Review

- Conduct a self assessment of the Council's current practice in charging for Services against the cycle for managing charges contained in Audit Scotland's Charging for Services Report;
- Undertake a mapping exercise of the Services that the Council has discretion to charge for and the Services it is currently charging for;
- Work with elected members and Council officers to examine the effectiveness of the Council's current Corporate Charging Policy; and
- Explore best practice in terms of clarity and transparency of charging for Services and to identify opportunities for improvement and benchmarking.

Scope of the Review:

What will be included?

The review will include all discretionary charges.

What will not be included?

The review will not cover statutory charges (charges set by outside bodies e.g. General Registrar of Scotland), council tax, non-domestic rates, grants or methods of paying for charges.

Who will be involved?

- Scrutiny Committee
- Elected members across Council Committees and MOGs
- Officers across Council Services
- Financial Controllers
- Democratic Services
- Colleagues from best practice Councils
- Colleagues from external organisations where relevant

Methods that will be used to undertake the review?

The research methodology agreed is:

- Desk top analysis of existing information
- Benchmarking visits – if required
- Focus groups with elected members
- Focus groups with officers
- Discussions/ interviews with external representatives e.g. colleagues from other Councils and external organisations where relevant
- Presentations of information as required

Evidence Required

- Corporate Charging Policy
- Service Charging Reports
- Audit Scotland Charging for Services Report
- Inspection reports
- Evaluation of member and officer experiences
- Evaluation of impact and evidence of good practice

Resources Required

- Member time outwith Committee to attend review meetings and participate in research and consultation
- Officer time (The Environment Service, Education and Children's Services, Housing and Community Care and the Chief Executive's Service)

