

Central Bedfordshire Council

07 October 2025

EXECUTIVE

Fees and Charges January 2026

Report of: Councillor John Baker, Executive Member for Finance and Highways (John.Baker@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Responsible Director: Denis Galvin, Director of Finance and S151 Officer (Denis.Galvin@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This report relates to a decision that is Key.

Purpose of this report

This report requests Executive to recommend to Council the approval of the revised Fees and Charges for 2026.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Executive is asked to consider and recommend to Council:

1. To approve the pricing schedule and the inflationary rate to be applied (of actual September 2025 CPI) for January 2026 Fees & Charges (Appendices C to L).
2. To note and comment on the Fees & Charges analysis (Appendices A & B)

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

This report was considered by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees in September 2025, and the Executive will be advised of any comments and recommendations made by these Committees.

Executive Summary

1. Fees & Charges (F&C) are subject to an annual review and any proposed increases to prices are subject to Council approval.
2. Fees & Charges price changes are due for implementation on the 1st of January each year for most services, although some remain at 1st of April (for example services to Schools/Academies and most of Adult Social Care & Housing) or as advised for statutory services.
3. The proposed Fees & Charges were presented to appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees in September 2025, and the October 2025 Executive recommendations will be made to the November 2025 Council meeting.
4. The Council's Fees & Charges Policy states that:
 - All fees and charges will be reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary in line with this policy. The Director of Finance will provide services with guidance each year as to the general inflation rate that may be applied.
 - All Fees & Charges should be reviewed on a more fundamental basis at least every 3 years, where it will be necessary to examine all the factors set out below in accordance with good practice guidance e.g., the CIPFA Practical Guide for Local Authorities on Income Generation.
 - The result of such a review should be included in the annual Fees & Charges report in that year in order that the Council is able to ensure that charges are fair, appropriate and comparable to local alternatives. Where appropriate, Equalities Impact Assessments will be carried out.
 - This fundamental review for F&C implemented in January was last carried out in 2023/24.
5. In November 2020, the Council agreed that an inflationary increase rate to be applied (the greater of 2% or September CPI), where applicable, to Fees & Charges. In June 2025, the Office for Budget Responsibility predicted that UK inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for September 2025 would be 3.6%.
6. Once the actual inflation rate for September 2025 is published then this will be reflected in the pricing for 2026 accordingly. Where service areas have instead proposed significant variations from this advisory level these have been identified below in paragraphs 13 to 42.

2024/25 Fees and Charges Analysis

7. In 2024/25 the Council had over 800 different Fees and Charges. The total income derived from Fees & Charges in 2024/25 was £68.2M comprising over 335k transactions. Appendix A shows a breakdown of income by each directorate and the volumes/transactions for each fee & charge heading (where Fees & Charges are grouped based on the type of service).
8. Furthermore, Appendix A provides an estimated value of the proposed Fees & Charges increase from January 2026 (assuming the same volumes) based on the proposed increase from service areas, and estimated value increase for every 1% increase. Fees & Charges that will remain at existing prices are shown with nil % increase and value.
9. Appendix B (which is an expansion of Appendix A) indicates which Fees & Charges have been reviewed at this stage and gives a breakdown of the income and volumes/transactions for 2024/25 based on the Fees & Charges description. In addition, Appendix B includes references to proposed pricing schedules for 2026, which includes all Fees & Charges listed on the appendix to the pricing schedules for each services area.

Pricing for 2026

10. The review of proposed prices for 2026 reflects three pricing options:
 - Prices remain at their 2025 level either because they are in line with other providers including Local Authorities or because there is insufficient data available to support a price change or they reflect the current cost of provision.
 - Prices increased with proposed inflation at 3.6% (TBC).
 - Prices increase by more than inflation if there is sufficient information to justify an increase.
11. Statutory charges remain at the 2025 rate and will be revised once the authority has been advised of any changes applicable for 2026.
12. Except for Services to Schools and the majority of Fees & Charges for Adult Social Care and Housing, the implementation date of the price changes for 2026 is the 1st of January 2026 wherever possible.

Adult Social Care

13. Most of the Fees & Charges for Adult Social Care and Housing (ASCH) are due for implementation from April 2026. Only charges related to Lettings, Deferred Payment Agreements and Brokerage fees are due for review and implementation from January 2026.
14. These Fees & Charges are listed in Appendix C – Adult Social Care January 2026. All proposed charges have been increased by an inflationary rate of 3.6% (to be confirmed when the September inflation rate is known). Charges for lettings of kitchen has been discontinued. Charges for Deferred Payment Agreements exclude VAT.

Place and Communities

15. Service areas of Place and Communities directorate have completed a fundamental review of all Fees & Charges from January 2026. The proposed prices for fees and charges related to Place and Community are shown at:
 - Appendix D – Place and Communities January 2026 Discretionary.
 - Appendix E – Place and Communities January 2026 Statutory.
 - Appendix F – Building Control January 2026
 - Appendix G – Planning January 2026
 - Appendix H – Pre-Application Advice for Building and Minerals & Waste January 2026 Discretionary.

Highways

16. Last year the service proposed comprehensive changes to the Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) from companies and Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders to better reflect the challenges surrounding the co-ordination of works on an increasingly busy road network. The new model provides clear cost distinction for closures on traffic sensitive and non-traffic sensitive roads, as well as an increasing factor for the duration of the works and their associated impact on residents, businesses and road users. These fees will increase in line with inflation at 3.6%.
17. The Highway Statements and Declarations fees for Commons Act – Correction of registration applications (unopposed and opposed) which currently stand at £1,000.00, however these fees haven't been changed in last few years. Following the review the service area is proposing to increase these fees from £1,000.00 to £2,395.80 for unopposed correction and £4,791.60 for opposed correction. This increase will reflect the current level of work required and benchmarked to surrounding authorities.
18. There are four new charges proposed for 2026, all related to Public Path Orders (Highways Act 1980 and Town & Country Planning Act 1990). These fees are listed in Appendix L – New Fees & Charges January 2026, showing the charge and the description for each proposed fee.
19. The rest of fees and charges for Highways have been increased by proposed inflationary rate of 3.6%

Private Hire Vehicle and Hackney Cab License

20. For most of the fees related to Private Hire Vehicle and Hackney Cab License the proposal is to increase in line with inflation at 3.6%. The fees related to license for Private Hire Vehicle and Hackney Cab have increased on average by 4% to consider the inflation at 3.6% and the cost of providing paper copy of the licenses. Fees for MOT testing services remain at the same level as in 2025.
21. Also, the service area proposes to introduce new fees related to taxi and private hire for internal and external license plates, drivers' licences badge and postage fees. These fees are listed in Appendix L – New Fees & Charges January 2026, showing the charge and the description for each proposed fee.

Public Protection and Other Licences

22. The proposed increase for Street trading and Scrap Metal Dealer licences have increased by 5.2% and 4.2% (average) respectively, which included the increase related to inflation of 3.6% and recovering the costs of sending a paper copy of the licence and a sign to the applicant.
23. Trading standards fees are set by the Buy with Confidence Scheme and have remained unchanged for the last 3 years. For 2026 these fees will increase in average by 8.4%.

Parking

24. Following the outcome of the public consultation in August 2021, car parking charges were fully reviewed during 2021/22 with the agreed charges implemented in April 2022. Since then, parking fees have remained unchanged, for 2026 the proposal is to increase parking fees in line with agreed inflation rate of 3.6%.

Library Services

25. Fees for Library Services will increase in line with inflation at 3.6% except charges for photocopies, prints/scans and internet access which will remain the same as in 2025, as services are competing against other local offers, increasing the price could negatively affect the income.

Houghton Hall Park – Room Hire

26. These fees are no longer managed by CBC as the management of the park and visitors centre was transferred to the local town council from December 2024.

Building Control Fees

27. CIPFA have produced guidance for local authority building Control accounting. This states that the overarching principles of the local authority building control charging system under the building (Local Authorities Charges) Regulations 2010 are full cost recovery, and users only pay for the service they receive.
28. Following the full review of Building Control fees and charges in July 2024, the building control team carried out a further detailed review. This review considered benchmarking against the charges of surrounding Local Authority Building Control services in order to ensure that our fees remain at reasonable levels in comparison to our counterparts.
29. The results of the benchmarking showed that Central Bedfordshire Council Building Control remains one of the cheapest authorities for chargeable fees, when compared with its neighbours. The review also considered the additional cost of running the services and therefore it is proposed that an 8% increase over and above the rate of inflation (3.6%) is applied.
30. This proposal is in line with CBC's Fees and Charges policy and CIPFA guidance and the service will continue to closely monitor and review regularly to understand both the impact on the local construction industry, the number of building control applications received by CBC and fee income.

31. The review included a Screening Tool to identifying any impacts on residents and staff including potential consultation & equality implications. This screening form was shared with the Equality Adviser who confirms that there are no identified equality impacts as a result of this proposal and therefore a full EQIA is not required at this time.
32. Charges related to Street Naming will increase by the rate of inflation at 3.6%. Self & Custom Build Register fee remains at the same level as in 2025.

Historic Environment Record (HER) Search

33. The Historic Environment Record team have carried out a review of charges which included a comparison to what other authorities charge for HER and is proposing to change the charging structure as well as the pricing to bring CBC's charges more in line with other authorities and providers. These new fees are listed in Appendix L – New Fees & Charges January 2026.

Pre-Application Advice and Minerals & Waste

34. In 2023/24 the service undertook a fundamental review which included a benchmarking exercise to compare CBC's fees and charges for Planning Pre-Application Advice against eight neighbouring authorities. The service considered the cost of delivering the pre-application planning advice including inflationary increase and other related cost factors. All pre -application fees will increase in line with inflation rate at 3.6%.
35. The Minerals & Waste pre-application fees were fully revised in March 2025 and the proposal for 2026 is that they remain at the same level as in 2025.

Resources - Finance and Monitoring Officer directorates

36. Proposed fees and charges related to Resources are shown at:
Appendix I – Resources (including Registration Service) January 2026 Discretionary
Appendix J – Resources (including Registration Service) January 2026 Statutory.

Registration & Crematorium services

37. Fees related to registration services will increase in line with inflation rate at 3.6%. Also, the services are proposing to publish a multi-year schedule for registration fees which will include charges for 2026 (as listed in Appendix I), and estimated charges 2027 and 2028. This would give service areas the flexibility to charge customers the correct fee when they book more than one year in advance. The proposed fees for 2027 and 2028 will increase accordingly in line with predicted CPI/inflationary rate for 2027 at & 2028 which stand at 2%.
38. Appendix I includes fees for crematorium services at Oakfield Gardens Crematorium in Steppingley. Most of Crematorium fees will remain at the same level as in 2025. These fees were created to consider a full cost recovery model based on the costs of our dedicated suppliers and benchmarking with other local crematoria to ensure that the Crematorium delivers value for money and is cost effective for residents.

Legal and Other services charges

39. Legal fees included on the Appendix I are just for noting as they are charged by Pathfinder in relation to their legal services. These fees are approved by the Pathfinder Board and are dependent on the seniority of the legal adviser undertaking the works – in line with Pathfinder Legal Services' external charges. An increase of 13.5% for all legal fees was approved by Pathfinder Legal's Board.
40. Other service charges have remained the same as in 2025, which include – Local Land Charges and administrative charges on Court Costs for Local Taxation.

Housing

41. Some of the Fees & Charges for HRA are due to increase from January 2026. These Fees & Charges are listed in Appendix K – Housing January 2026.
42. For the most part charges are going up by inflation rate at 3.6%, but for fees related to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) are staying the same as in 2025 (where the charge is a fixed %, or where there is a statutory limit). Independent Living fees have remain same as in 2025.
43. There are two new charges proposed which are listed in Appendix L – New Fees & Charges January 2026, showing the charge and the description for each proposed fee.

New fees and charges for 2026

44. New proposed fees and charges to be introduced from January 2026 are listed in Appendix L – New Fees & Charges January 2026.

Council Priorities

45. CBC's fees and charges are intended to offer value for money while considering staff time, expertise and overheads. The income raised is very important and makes a real contribution to funding services and enabling the Council to further its objectives for the community. The proposed fees and charges support the Council's priorities listed below:
 - Be ambitious in our plans towards improving and maintaining the roads and travel network.
 - Ensure that environmental, sustainability and climate resilience impact will be at the heart of all Council decision-making.
 - Enable people to live active, healthy, and independent lives.
 - Enable the right care, at the right time, in the right place for those in need of support.
 - Provide the environment for economic prosperity in which existing businesses can grow, and new ones will move to the area.

Legal Implications

46. In setting and reviewing fees and charges all services must adhere to the Council's Fees & Charges Policy. Proposed changes to fees and charges are subject to Full Council Approval (Part 2 Article 4 of the Constitution). The relevant statutory provisions on charging are as follows:

- The Local Government Act 2000 gives local authorities wide power to act for the economic, social, and environmental well-being of their areas. The general power to charge for discretionary services was included in the Local Government Act 2003. Section 93 of the 2003 Act provides that when the Council is providing a discretionary service, it may charge for the service, provided the person receiving the service has agreed to its provision. When using this power, a local authority must ensure that the income received from the services does not exceed the cost of provision.
- The Localism Act 2011 introduced the 'general power of competence'. Section 3 mirrors section 93 of the 2003 Act and duplicates the existing power to charge for providing discretionary services on a cost recovery basis. Section 4 permits local authorities to trade in areas that are not connected to the performance of their functions in exercising the general power of competence provided this is done through a Company.

Financial and Risk Implications

47. Financial and risk implications are part of the annual review of all fees and charges in line with the Council's Fees and Charging Policy. The Director of Finance will provide services with guidance each year as to the maximum inflation rate that may be applied.

Equality & Diversity Implications

48. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty (i.e., public sector equality duty - PSED) to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

49. The Council's Fees & Charges policy requires that reasonable notice should be given to service users before any new charge or significant change is implemented. This is to ensure that there is no adverse effect on vulnerable groups when setting new fees and charges or making significant changes to an existing charge.

50. As part of the Council's commitment to equal opportunities, it will, as far as reasonably practicable and in line with any relevant Equalities Impact Assessments, provide appropriate access to all its services and to all its activities. Concessions are clearly one of the ways in which the Council can fulfil this commitment. Where appropriate, Equalities Impact Assessments will be carried out for proposals, and any findings/outcomes will be placed before the decision maker to ensure due regard can be given to them.

Sustainability Implications

51. This paper relates to changes in the charges for existing Fees & Charges, however, where a new F&C is proposed, the Directorate responsible will be tasked with looking at the sustainability implications and liaising with the relevant lead office and Executive Member.

Appendices:

- Appendix A – F&C Summary analysis
- Appendix B – F&C Value and Volume analysis (expanded)
- Appendix C – Adult Social Care January 2026
- Appendix D – Place and Communities January 2026 Discretionary
- Appendix E – Place and Communities January 2026 Statutory
- Appendix F – Building Control January 2026 Statutory
- Appendix G – Planning January 2026 Discretionary
- Appendix H – Pre-Application Advice for Building and Minerals & Waste January 2025 Discretionary.
- Appendix I – Resources (including Registration Service) January 2026 Discretionary
- Appendix J – Resources (including Registration Service) January 2026 Statutory
- Appendix K – Housing January 2026
- Appendix L – New Fees & Charges January 2026

Report author:

Gezim Leka, Principal Accountant - Systems and Strategy, Finance.
Gezim.Leka@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk