

COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 6th December 2017

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

The Panel received the Review of Fees and Charges. The Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources stated that the fees and charges presented to Members was a draft and that there was an opportunity to suggest amendments.

A Member questioned why fees and charges set nationally had been included as there is nothing the Council can do to affect these. The Head of Resources reminded Members that it is a statutory requirement for Councils to publish a complete schedule of fees and charges including those that the Council has no control over.

The Panel welcomed the news that there will be no increase in car park charges next year and hopes that this stance is maintained as the schedule of fees and charges is finalised in the budget setting process.

Concern was expressed that the increases on swimming lessons and access to the swimming pools were high and that this would have an impact upon customer numbers. The Panel was informed that competitor analysis had been carried out and found that One Leisure remains cheaper than leisure centres in Peterborough and Bedfordshire. In addition, there are currently waiting lists for swimming lessons and it is not anticipated that customer numbers would be adversely affected by any increases.

A Member suggested that the fee for a zoo licence was not enough and that thought could be given to increasing the fee.

It was suggested that little increases in fees and often would perhaps be a better approach than no increase for a while followed by a large increase.

Concern was raised that there are large increases on room hire at the Countryside Park however there is no comparison data and it is difficult to establish what was raised in previous years. In response, the Panel was informed that where there is no obvious comparator the relevant Head of Service and Executive Councillor could decide to have an inflationary increase or a round number increase.

Members welcomed reducing the charges for farmers markets to zero in order to encourage more of them.

Concern was raised that the analysis in the report did not go into enough depth and where there are large increases the narrative to explain the reasons why was lacking. There was also no narrative on the competitor analysis and any stress testing carried out. In addition, the Cabinet may want to give thought to displaying the increase in fees and charges as a percentage of the total revenue raise.