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16 September 2026

APOLOGIES: Committee Services
Email: Committee.clerk@maldon.gov.uk

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Doug Wilkinson

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend the meeting of the;

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

on **THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2026** at **7.30 pm**

in the **Council Chamber, Maldon District Council Offices, Princes Road, Maldon.**

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A copy of the agenda is attached.

Yours faithfully

Chief Executive

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:

CHAIRPERSON	Councillor A Fittock
VICE-CHAIRPERSON	Councillor M G Bassenger
COUNCILLORS	J R Burrell-Cook S Dodsley J Driver M F L Durham A S Fluker K M H Lagan S J N Morgan U G C Siddall-Norman P L Spenceley

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AGENDA
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2026

1. **Chairperson's Notices**

2. **Apologies for Absence**

3. **Minutes of the Last meeting** (Pages 5 - 10)

   To consider the Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 23 July 2026 (copy enclosed).

4. **Disclosure of Interest**

   To disclose the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registrable interests and Non-Registrable Interests relating to items of business on the agenda having regard to paragraph 9 and Appendix B of the Code of Conduct for Members.

   (Members are reminded that they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting).

5. **Public Participation**

   To receive the views of members of the public, of which prior notification in writing has been received (no later than noon on the Tuesday prior to the day of the meeting).

   Should you wish to submit a question please complete the online form at: www.maldon.gov.uk/publicparticipation.

6. **Motion Referred to this Committee from the Council**

   To consider the following Motion referred to this Committee by the Council in accordance with Procedure Rule 4(3).

   a) Motion from Councillor K Jennings (Motion 01/2026) (Pages 11 - 14)

      To consider the Motion, proposed by Councillor K Jennings and seconded by Councillor R H Siddall, and the accompanying report of the Director of Strategy and Improvement (copy enclosed).

7. **Budget Monitoring Report - Quarter 1** (Pages 15 - 26)

   To consider the report of the Chief Finance Officer (copy enclosed).

8. **Medium Term Financial Strategy Update** (Pages 27 - 34)

   To consider the report of the Chief Finance Officer (copy enclosed).

9. **Discretionary Fees and Charges Policy 2027/28** (Pages 35 - 38)

To consider the report of the Director of Finance (copy enclosed).

10. **Any other items of business that the Chairperson of the Committee decides are urgent**

NOTICES

Recording of Meeting
Please note that the Council will be recording and publishing on the Council's website any part of this meeting held in open session.

Fire
We do not have any fire alarm testing scheduled for this meeting. In the event of a fire, a siren will sound. Please use either of the two marked fire escape routes. Once out of the building please proceed to the designated muster point located on the grass verge by the police station entrance. Please gather there and await further instruction. If you feel you may need assistance to evacuate the building, please make a member of Maldon District Council staff aware.

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Please be aware, there is not currently lift access to the Council Chamber.

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MINUTES of
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
23 JULY 2026

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor A Fittock
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor M G Bassenger
Councillors	J R Burrell-Cook, S Dodsley, J Driver, M F L Durham, A S Fluker, K M H Lagan, S J N Morgan, U G C Siddall-Norman and P L Spenceley

1. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the general housekeeping arrangements.

At this point in the meeting, reference was made to a recent tragedy that had occurred on Mersea island, which was in a neighbouring District. It was noted that two persons had, lost their lives and others remained in hospital. At the request of the Chairperson, all present stood for a moment's silent reflection.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 June 2026 be approved and confirmed.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

6. ANTI-CORRUPTION POLICY SUITE

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Finance presenting the following Policies for Members' consideration, which together formed the Council's Anti-Corruption Policy Suite:

- Anti-Money Laundering Policy at Appendix A, updating and replacing the Council's existing policy.
- Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy at Appendix B, updating and replacing the Council's existing policy.
- Anti-Fraud Policy at Appendix C, updating and replacing the Council's existing policy.
- Sanctions and Prosecutions Policy at Appendix D, updating and replacing the Council's Benefit Counter Fraud policy.
- Whistleblowing Policy at Appendix E, replacing the Council's existing policy.

Members noted that the Council's anti-bribery, corruption and fraud policies were reviewed every three years, or sooner if legislation changed. The report highlighted when the last set of related policies were agreed and the UK Government definition of corruption.

The Director of Finance introduced the report and noted that there had been no cases of proven fraud in the past six years, although small numbers of potential fraud cases had been investigated during that period. The Council had robust processes and guidance in place to reduce the risks of corruption and financial fraud. The report outlined the six principles of adequate procedures to prevent bribery and corruption.

The policies before the Committee had been reviewed alongside IT policies and processes designed to protect the Council from cyber-attacks, staff policies detailing employee and management obligations, and service specific guidance. The review had been undertaken by a number of Officers, with advice and support from other local authorities, together with the Council's Senior Leadership and Senior Management teams.

In response to questions raised, the Director of Finance confirmed that:

- The last sentence of paragraph 3.2 was incomplete, this was a drafting error and it should say that a whistleblowing policy had been previously approved by Committee. However, he would confirm the exact information missing from the report and circulate this to Members outside of the meeting.
- On Appendix D, Sanctions and Prosecutions Policy 2026, the table on page 2 of the policy was incomplete, specifically the summary of purpose section. The Director advised that he would correct this and circulate the missing information to Members outside of the meeting.

In response to a further question, the Director of Finance advised that he was the Council's Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MRLO) and if necessary, he would engage with the Monitoring Officer to ensure that appropriate action was taken.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report. This was duly seconded and agreed.

RESOLVED that the Anti-Corruption Policy Suite, as set out in Appendices A to E of the report, be agreed:

- Anti-Money Laundering Policy at Appendix A.
- Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy at Appendix B.
- Anti-Fraud Policy at Appendix C.

- Sanctions and Prosecutions Policy at Appendix D.
- Whistleblowing Policy at Appendix E.

7. FRIARY FIELDS PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Place, Planning and Growth seeking Members' approval to acquire Friary Fields, Maldon, a property comprising six self-contained one-bedroom flats, for use as Temporary Accommodation (TA).

Members were reminded of the pressure nationally on TA services. It was noted that, if approved, the acquisition would increase the Council's supply of in-district TA, reduce reliance on costly nightly paid and out of area placements, and provide a long-term housing asset that supports the Council's statutory homelessness duties. The report also sought approval for a capital budget of up to £800,000 comprising the acquisition cost together with essential refurbishment and compliance works required prior to occupation.

The Head of Housing and Building Control introduced the report and provided further information regarding the Council's duty to provide temporary accommodation, the current sustained demand for TA, the use of out of district placements and the benefits from the recent acquisition of Stephens House by the Council.

It was noted that the acquisition of Friary Fields would provide a further opportunity to increase the Council's supply of TA, reduce reliance on costly out-of-area placements and improve housing outcomes for homeless households. In addition, it would provide a long-term housing asset which could support service delivery during and beyond Local Government Reorganisation.

Members were advised that the proposal was considered to be a prudent investment which supported both operational service requirements and the Council's longer-term strategic objectives. The proposal would be subject to the satisfactory completion of valuation, surveys, legal due diligence and financial appraisal prior to acquisition, together with refurbishment costs once acquired.

The Chairperson then put the recommendations set out in the report and these were duly seconded.

In response to a number of questions, the Head of Housing and Building Control provided the following information:

- the Council had made an offer to the Registered Provider and received a quote for the remedial works required in order for the building to be brought into use. Therefore, a maximum budget of £800,000 had been requested based on these prices.
- The property would comprise six one-bedroomed flats of the same size and would be offered to residents of the District, rather than to persons from outside of the District.
- The units would be used as TA as a stop-gap measure whilst the Council supported residents in finding longer-term housing solutions.
- Any income received from the property would be used towards ongoing maintenance, and the Council was expecting to enter into a service level agreement with a Registered Provider that would manage the property.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendations which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

(i) That a capital budget of up to £800,000 be approved to fund the acquisition of the Friary Fields property and any essential refurbishment, compliance and associated works required to bring the accommodation into use as temporary accommodation;

(ii) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Place, Planning and Growth, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Section 151 Officer, to agree the final purchase price, approve the scope of essential refurbishment works within the approved capital budget, and complete the acquisition subject to satisfactory survey, valuation, legal and financial due diligence.

8. SUEZ DEPOT EXPANSION PROJECT

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities presenting the Suez Depot Expansion Project business case (Appendix 1) and seeking Members' approval of the total project budget which was funded through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Grant. It was noted that the Business Case (Appendix 1) had been circulated in a supplementary pack to all Members.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities introduced the report and reminded Members that the Council's waste, recycling and street cleansing services were delivered by SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd from the Promenade Park depot. He then provided background information regarding the current depot layout and the need to identify a suitable long-term solution.

A feasibility study had been carried out to consider a range of options, detailed in the report, for increasing depot capacity and was attached at Appendix 2 to the report. Each option had been assessed against technical, financial, operational, legal and risk criteria and the conclusion was that extending the existing depot into the neighbouring Parks Depot area represented the preferred option. Further details of this preferred option, together with its benefits, were provided by the Director and set out in the report.

Members were informed that, to formally cover the proposed extension of the site and set out the Council's rights and responsibilities, a lease was required and Committee approval was therefore sought. The lease would be in place until the expiry of the contract period in 2032 and would exclude the automatic right to renew at the end of the term. The proposed peppercorn rent reflected the current lease and ensured consistent arrangements.

The Chairperson put the recommendations set out in the report, which were duly seconded.

The Committee congratulated Officers on the submitted report and the successful attainment of the EPR grant. It was commented that the proposal would provide the best possible facility for the Council's waste services both now and in the future.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

(i) That the total Suez Depot Expansion project budget of £348,289 be approved;

(ii) That the Committee noted that the project was fully funded through the Extended Producer Responsibility Grant;

(iii) That a lease for the extension of the site area, on terms consistent with the current contract, including a peppercorn rent, be granted and the necessary arrangements to give effect to this decision be authorised.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Finance on the Council's investment activity for the 2025 / 26 financial year in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code, and the Council's Treasury Management Policy and Treasury Management Practices.

It was noted that the CIPFA Code of Practice required authorities to report on the performance of the treasury management function at least twice yearly. The report provided detail in respect of the following areas:

- External Context – Appendix 1 to the report, prepared by the Link Group engaged by the Council to provide treasury management consultancy and advice services, provided an overview of the external economic environment.
- Local Context – The Council did not hold any external debt during 2025 / 26, with the exception of a five-year hire purchase agreement relating to the acquisition of two tractors in April 2023. The Council remained under-borrowed by £8.552m, attributable to the cost of waste collection vehicles and investment in the Blackwater Leisure Centre.
- Investment Activity (April 2025 – March 2026) – Members were advised that the level of investments held by the Council had seen a decrease of £3m during this period and the report highlighted the reasons for this. The Council continued to take a prudent approach to investment, with priority given to security and liquidity over yield.
- Performance – Budgeted Income and Outturn – The average income returns on the Authority's investments were detailed along with the overall investment for the year.
- Compliance with Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy - As set out in Appendix 1, it was noted that all Prudential Indicators for 2025 / 26 had been complied with. All treasury management activities undertaken during the second half of the year complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy.
- Outlook for 2026 / 27 (summary of advice from Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG) Corporate Market) - The Committee noted the updated economic outlook from MUFG Corporate Markets, which indicated that inflationary pressures and energy market uncertainty had delayed expectations of interest rate reductions. As a result, the next Bank Rate cut was not forecast until 2027, with gilt yields expected to remain under pressure from inflation and wider fiscal challenges.

The Chairperson put the recommendations set out in the report.

In response to comments raised, the Director Finance advised that:

- Up-front payment dates had been agreed with Parish Councils, and other organisations, such as Essex Fire and Essex County Council. This ensured that the Council knew when monies needed to be paid out and could meet payment dates. The slight differences between these timings were what enabled the Council to make those investments. The collection rate remained strong at slightly over 98%.
- Investment decisions were framed within the Treasury Management Strategy, including counterparties, credit ratings and capitalisation levels. Advice was also taken from the Link Group, which provided more technical guidance on the way the Council invested. In simple terms, the Council followed the market rather than seeking particular advantages or disadvantages by scrutinising the accounts of individual companies, a practice known as passive investment.
- Borrowing from the Council's reserves had been referred to in the Treasury Management Strategy. In addition, the Link Group had helped the Council navigate the fluctuations in borrowing and consideration of the 'cost of carry', being the total expense of holding an investment or asset over time, including interest on borrowed money, storage fees and insurance.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

(i) that the 2025 / 26 Treasury Outturn report be noted, including compliance with all treasury management indicators during the course of the year and the positive result from investment income secured;

(ii) That the alignment between the Treasury Management Outturn, the Budget Outturn for 2025 / 26, and the 2025 / 26 (pre-audit) accounts, which provided confirmation of the overall reported position, be noted.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 8.02 pm.

A FITTOCK
CHAIRPERSON

REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND IMPROVEMENT

to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
24 SEPTEMBER 2026

MOTION REFERRED TO THIS COMMITTEE FROM THE COUNCIL

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide information to inform Members' considerations of the Motion referred to the Strategy and Resources Committee by the Council at its meeting on 10 September 2026.

2. MEMBER MOTION

2.1 In accordance with Procedure Rule 4, the following motion was proposed by Councillor K Jennings, and seconded by Councillor R H Siddall.

"'To create a retail working group, that works with partners to deliver support and create retail business opportunities across the district. This should be a similar model to One Maldon District, with representatives from the retail sector, other partners and other local authorities, to ensure our high streets across the district (not just Maldon) to ensure that our high streets and retail businesses continue to grow and thrive."

3. OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO MOTION

(i) That the Committee requests officers to investigate the feasibility and viability of a business and economic engagement forum, aligned to the priorities of the Corporate Plan.

(ii) That, subject to the approval of (i) above, the outcome of this work is presented to this Committee to make an informed decision on the establishment of a business and economic engagement forum.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Council has previously undertaken a range of initiatives aimed at supporting town centres and high street activity. These include delivery of improvements identified through the Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan (CAMP), support for Maldon Market, regeneration projects, public realm improvements and partnership working with businesses and other stakeholders. A Member-led High Street Focus Group was established following adoption of the CAMP to champion the interests of Maldon High Street and support partnership working on town centre improvements. The Terms of Reference for that Focus Group note that its original purpose was to support delivery of Lower High Street improvements and broader town centre initiatives. With the agreement of the Chairperson, this Focus Group was dissolved in January 2026.

4.2 The Council recognises the important role that retail businesses, markets and town centres play in supporting the local economy, providing employment opportunities, attracting visitors and maintaining vibrant communities across the District. The District’s retail function is not limited to Maldon High Street and includes the town centre of Burnham-on-Crouch, the centre in Heybridge, and a wider network of village and neighbourhood areas serving local communities.

4.3 More recent evidence identifies significant changes affecting the retail sector, including the growth of online shopping, changes in consumer behaviour, rising operating costs and wider economic uncertainty.

4.4 Statistical analysis[1] of the businesses across the District identifies the largest sectors as follows:

Industry	**Number of businesses**	**Position**
Construction	795	1
Professional, scientific and technical	450	2
Business administration and support services	295	3
Retail	265	4
Manufacturing	235	5

4.5 The Council delivers a comprehensive programme of business engagement and support through its Supporting Local Business Programme, which includes direct business engagement activities, sector engagement, regular networking opportunities and signposting to wider support services. The programme seeks to support business growth, resilience, investment and collaboration across all sectors of the local economy. In addition, the Council’s partnership with the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB), delivers business support, business events and economic growth initiatives across the wider North Essex area. The NEEB programme is specifically designed to enhance existing business support activity and avoid duplication, while creating opportunities for businesses to discuss challenges, share best practice and identify opportunities for growth.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Any new business engagement forum would need to be developed as part of, and complementary to, the Council's existing work. This would help ensure a coordinated approach to business engagement, avoid duplication of existing networks and activities, maximise available resources and create a single strategic forum through which the Council can engage with businesses on matters relating to economic growth, investment, regeneration, workforce development, skills and town centre vitality. By bringing together businesses from a range of sectors, the forum could provide a stronger evidence base for decision-making and a more effective mechanism for supporting sustainable economic growth across the District.

6. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

6.1 Supporting our communities

6.1.1 The creation of a new engagement forum could provide an opportunity to strengthen engagement between the Council, local businesses and community stakeholders.

[1] UK Business Counts 2025

The forum could help identify local challenges and opportunities affecting town and village centres, supporting vibrant and sustainable communities across the District.

6.2 **Investing in our District**

6.2.1 By bringing together key stakeholders, opportunities may be identified to support investment, improve local centres and enhance the visitor experience.

6.3 **Growing our economy**

6.3.1 The forum could provide a mechanism for businesses to share insights, identify barriers to growth and inform future economic development initiatives. The feasibility work would assess the potential value of such a forum and its alignment with Council priorities.

7. IMPLICATIONS

(i) **Impact on Customers** - The Council's customers include local businesses, residents, visitors and community stakeholders. Exploring the feasibility of a forum may help identify opportunities to improve engagement with businesses and better understand issues affecting town and village centres. However, there is a risk that expectations may be raised regarding future interventions or investment which may not ultimately be deliverable. Any future proposals would require clear objectives and stakeholder communication.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** - No direct equality implications have been identified at this stage. Should proposals to establish a forum be developed, consideration would be given to ensuring fair and inclusive representation from businesses of different sizes, sectors and locations across the District, together with compliance with the Council's equality duties.

(iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** - There are no significant strategic or fraud risks associated with undertaking the proposed feasibility work.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** - The Council's current business support programme is scheduled to conclude on 31 March 2027 and there is currently no identified budget allocation for business support activity beyond this date.

Should the feasibility work identify a need for ongoing officer support, business engagement activity, project delivery or other interventions arising from the work of any future group, there is a risk that the Council may have limited capacity to support significant activity unless additional funding or resources are secured. Any future financial implications and resource requirements would be reported to Members for consideration before any decision is taken regarding the establishment of a working group.

(v) **Impact on Resources (human)** - Officer resources would be required to undertake the feasibility work and potentially support any future working group. Should the demands on officer time outweigh the identified benefits, alternative approaches to business engagement may need to be considered. The feasibility exercise will assess resource requirements before any substantive proposal is brought forward.

(vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** - There are no significant LGR related risks associated with undertaking the proposed feasibility work.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to: Patrick Cole, Head of Economic Development.

REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
24 SEPTEMBER 2026

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER 1

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide Members of the Committee with an updated Quarter 1 (Q1) financial position for the Council the period ended 30 June 2026. It should be noted that Q1 is still early in the year and may change in the coming months.

1.2 This matter is brought forward for consideration with the agreement of the Chairperson of this Committee so that the Council has clarity on the available funding for 2026/27 to be able to carry out its operations in a timely manner.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) That Members note the forecast revenue outturn as at 30 June 2026 is £101,000 over budget (0.7%) Further information can be found at **APPENDIX 1** along with reasons for significant variances;

(ii) That Members consider the forecast capital outturn as at 30 June 2026 which is for a total capital programme delivery of £7,054k against the revised budget of £7,119k. Further information can be found at **APPENDIX 2** along with reasons for significant variances.

(iii) That the balances within the Earmarked Reserves and General Fund set out in **APPENDIX 3** be noted;

(iv) That the revenue budget reconciliation in **APPENDIX 4** be noted.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 The Q1 Budget Monitoring report provides a financial forecast for the Council for the full year ending 31 March 2027 including revenue and capital forecasts and the impact of those on retained reserves (general and earmarked). It shows performance is closely aligned to budget demonstrating good financial management in operational areas.

3.2 As detailed in **APPENDIX 4,** there is a £110k virement to align the directorate salary budgets with the outcome of the recent staffing restructure. Within the financial regulations, this virement, as it relates to pay, has been approved and signed off by the Head of Paid Service and does not require the separate approval of the Strategy and Resources Committee. The impact of this adjustment is reflected in the Revised Budget, used as the comparator for Q1 forecasting.

3.3 **Revenue Budget Monitoring – Quarter 1**

3.3.1 The forecast for the revenue budget projects an overspend of £101,000 against the 2026/27 budget equating to a variance of 0.71% of budget, within a +/- 1% tolerance. The most material individual forecast overspend is in relation to planning appeals (£179,800 over budget). This is driven by inherent uncertainty in relation to forecasting the likelihood or timing of planning appeals and their associated cost. To mitigate the uncertainty within service base budgets, the use of an earmarked reserve for planning appeals is being considered as a mechanism to manage these costs.

3.3.2 Other areas of overspend include expenditure in relation to carried forward activities from the previous financial year. As at Q1, this expenditure has not been drawn from reserves as, where possible, costs will be contained within existing budgets. A reserve drawdown would be requested and undertaken if costs are not containable as the year progresses.

3.3.3 Areas of underspend primarily relate to savings resulting from vacant posts across directorates in year. Further detail is included in **APPENDIX 1**.

MDC: Quarter 1 forecast	**FULL YEAR 2026/27**			
Directorate	**Revised Budget (£000)**	**Q1 Forecast (£000)**	**Variance to budget**	**Variance to budget**
Total Net Service Expenditure	14,137	14,238	101	0.7%
Total Funding	(14,137)	(14,137)	0	0.0%
Total Net Expenditure	0	101	101	

Figure 1 - summary revenue forecast at Quarter 1

3.4 **Capital budget Monitoring – Quarter 1**

3.4.1 The forecast for the capital budget projects an underspend of £65,000 against the revised 2026/27 Capital programme of £7,119k. The main project details can be found at **APPENDIX 2**.

3.5 **Reserves**

3.5.1 The Council holds a number of earmarked reserves (provisions) for specific purposes and the General Fund Balance as a general unallocated amount.

3.5.2 At the start of the financial year, earmarked reserves totalled £2.8m and general fund reserves totalled £7.6m. While there were no formal decisions in Q1 requiring an allocation or draw on reserves, there are a number of items expected to impact on the reserves position in Quarter 2. These include the creation of a provision for the Local Plan delivery work, purchase of Friary Fields as six Temporary Accommodation units, and some use of underspends identified at the end of the last financial year which were moved to general reserves pending a clearer view of spending needs in the new year. Within the General Fund Balance, a ‘core’ reserve of £2.3m is retained as a funding source ’of last resort’.

3.5.3 Reserves brought into 2026/27 are detailed at **APPENDIX 3**, which is aligned to the pre-audit (raft) accounts.

4. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

4.1 **Delivering good quality services.**

4.1.1 Regular reporting and monitoring of the Council's financial position is a key control in ensuring the Council makes the best use of its resources and is able to make informed decisions to support our residents.

5. IMPLICATIONS

(i) **Impact on Customers** – None directly.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None directly.

(iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – None directly.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The subject of the report.

(v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None directly.

(vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** – The financial position of the Council will be scrutinised in advance of reorganisation as part of planning for LGR delivery. This report is written with that scrutiny in mind.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to: Ben Jay, Director of Finance.

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APPENDIX 1

Revenue forecast

MDC: Quarter 1 forecast	FULL YEAR 2026/27				Commentary
Directorate	**Budget (£000)**	**Q1 Forecast (£000)**	**Variance to budget (Over)/Under (£000)**	**Variance to budget (Over)/Under (%)**	
Neighbourhood Services and Communities	6,698	6,761	63	0.9%	Within tolerance
Legal & Governance	1,095	1,110	15	1.4%	Electoral registration and member training requested 2026/27
Place, Planning & Growth	1,567	1,699	132	8.4%	Consultancy and legal fees in relation to planning appeals.
Finance	2,039	2,041	1	0.1%	Within tolerance
Strategy & Improvement	3,412	3,353	(60)	-1.8%	Vacant post savings within HR and Economic Development.
Chief Executive	125	125	0	0.0%	Within tolerance
Total Service Expenditure	**14,937**	**15,089**	**152**	**1.0%**	
MRP and Investment Income	(800)	(851)	(51)	6.4%	
Total Net Service Expenditure	**14,137**	**14,238**	**101**	**0.7%**	

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APPENDIX 2

Capital forecast

Capital programme summary	Revised Budget 2026/27 £000	Q1 Forecast: Capital Outturn 2026/27 £000	Forecast Variance 2026/27 £000	Indicative Funding Source
Maldon Promenade	*1,441*	*1,526*	*(85)*	General reserves
Other Parks and Open Spaces	*360*	*221*	*139*	General reserves
Playsites	*660*	*656*	*4*	General reserves
All Parks and opens spaces	2,461	2,404	57	General reserves
Leisure centres	3,522	3,522	0	General fund / Internal borrowing
Housing	539	539	0	Better Care Fund
Car Parking	30	30	0	General reserves
Community Centres	55	51	4	General reserves
Sports	225	225	0	General reserves
Cemeteries	20	20	0	General reserves
I.T	47	47	0	General reserves
Vehicle & Plant Replacement	65	58	7	General reserves
Council Offices	79	79	0	General reserves
Public Conveniences	58	58	0	General reserves
Grant funded projects	18	21	(3)	UKSPF Grant (B/fwd funding)
Total	**7,119**	**7,054**	**65**	

Source of funding	£000	£000	£000
General Fund (General Reserves)	3,362	3,294	68
Internal borrowing	3,200	3,200	0
Grants	557	560	(3)
Total	**7,119**	**7,054**	**65**

*** Capital Projects approved in July Strategy and Resources committee to be reflected in the capital programme in Q2**

	£000	Indicative Funding Source
Housing - Friary Fields house purchase	800	General Fund
Suez Prom depot	348	Extended Producer Responsibility Grant
Total	**1,148**	

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Reserves

Reserve	Description	Balance as at 01/04/26 £000
Council Tax and Business Rates equalisation	This reserve is to counter the timing differences in Council Tax and Business Rates funding. [June 2026 update: due to LGR, this reserve will be phased out]	(954)
Transformation	To provide funds to meet the one-off investment costs of efficiency savings or service reductions to be realised in future years. Also to enable the upfront costs of potential income generating projects.	0
planning appeals fund	To provide funds to meet one-off costs of planning appeals	0
CIL and Local Plan review	Funds put aside from unspent budgets to support the creation and adoption of the Local Plan	(400)
Repairs & Renewals Fund	To provide funds to support additional revenue / capital costs arising from the need to maintain the Council's Asset base.	(123)
Local Government Reorganisation	To provide funds for costs incurred relating to LGR	(1,000)
Economic Development	Reserve set aside to support economic development activities in the District.	(10)
Electoral Registration	To provide a reserve to enable the Authority to forward fund the District Elections every 4 years and By-Elections when they occur.	(121)
Community Housing Fund Grant	Reserve to support Community-led housing delivery. Objective is to help deliver affordable housing aimed at first time buyers. Accumulated grant funding.	(93)
Domestic Abuse Grant	To support domestic abuse victims including the funding of associated staffing. Accumulated grant funding.	(84)
Homeless Reduction Act Grant	Reserve set up to use three years of grant funding for Homelessness Reduction Officer. Funds RSI post. Accumulated grant funding.	(57)
Total Earmarked Reserves		**(2,842)**
General Fund		**(7,618)**
Total Revenue Reserves		**(10,460)**
Capital receipts reserve		(1,019)
Capital Grants Unapplied (DFG)		(653)
Usable reserves		**(12,132)**

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APPENDIX 4

Reconciliation to Original Budget

	Original Budget £000	Revenue commitments c/f 2025/26 £000	S&R: Salary virements £000	Revised Budget £000
Chief Executive	218	0	(93)	125
Finance	2,343	0	(188)	2,156
Legal and Governance	1,926	0	(866)	1,060
Strategy & Improvement	1,903	0	1,509	3,412
Neighbourhood Services & Communities	6,702	0	(85)	6,617
Place, Planning & Growth	1,734	0	(167)	1,567
MRP & Investment income	(800)	0	0	(800)
TOTAL Net Service Expenditure	**14,027**	**0**	**110**	**14,137**
Funded by:				
Council Tax	(8,695)	0	0	(8,695)
Business Rates	(3,070)	0	0	(3,070)
Government Grants	(1,536)	0	0	(1,536)
Transfer (from)/to Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	0
Transfer (from)/to General Fund	(726)	0	(110)	(836)
Total Funding	**(14,027)**	**0**	**(110)**	**(14,137)**
Net Total Expenditure	**(0)**	**0**	**0**	**(0)**

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REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
24 SEPTEMBER 2026

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report presents the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy as the framework within which the budget for 2027/28 will be prepared.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members:

(i) endorse the timetable for budget preparation for 2027/28;

(ii) consider the risks the Council faces and how the MTFS helps to address those;

(iii) endorse the overall financial strategy proposed and the actions arising.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 **Timetable**

3.1.1 The proposed timetable for preparing the budget for 2027/28 is set out below. This timetable proposes initial work over the summer period to identify options for budgets which can be revised and revised through the autumn. The settlement has already been published as a draft (indicative) position as part of the multi-year settlement set out by government in December 2025.

July	Member priorities identified for 2027/28 budgets.
August-September	Senior Leadership Team (SLT) work on developing plans in line with Member priorities
October	First draft of options
November	Second draft of options
December	Final draft of options (pre settlement)
January	Budget proposals (post settlement)
February Council	Budget Council meeting – budget and council tax for 2027/28

3.2 **Risks and opportunities**

3.2.1 The key risks faced by the Council including the need to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR); a reduction in funding between 2025/26 and

2026/27; and ongoing inflationary pressures. Given recent announcements on LGR, preparing for different possible outcomes is essential.

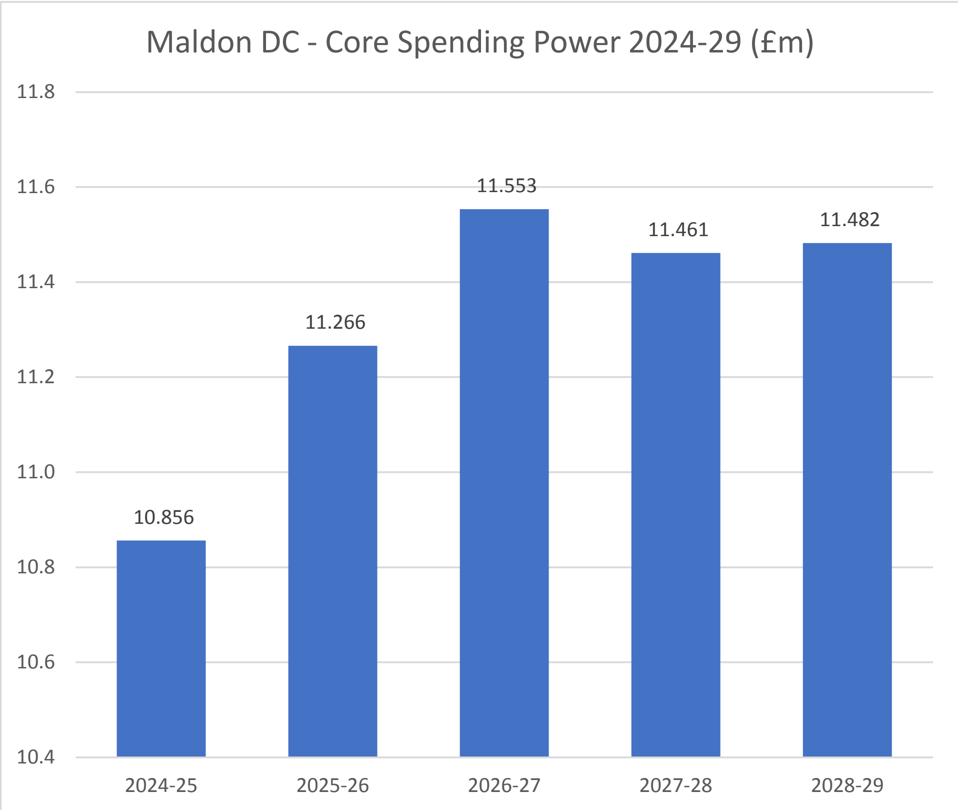
3.3 Funding gap

3.3.1 Government funding is reduced between 2025/26 and 2026/27 by £100k. In previous years, a level of inflationary growth of around £300k has been provided, but that is not indicated in the multi-year settlement. The loss of £100k of cash plus the absence of inflationary funding growth of £300k indicates an overall funding loss of £400k. Inflationary pressures usually amount to around £1.1m year-to-year. Taken together, with no other changes the budget position for 2026/27 therefore starts with effective pressures of £1.5m.

3.3.2 Summary of current estimated funding gap.

		£m	£m
Inflation pressures	Pay	0.840	
	Non-pay (contracts, utilities)	0.796	
	Income (fees and charges)	(0.517)	
	Subtotal		1.119
Funding reduction	Loss of inflation funding	287	
	Loss of cash funding	92	
	Subtotal		379
Total pressures			1,498

3.3.3 Summary chart of total Core Spending Power, 2024/25 to 2028/29. This shows how, after two years of inflation-related growth (the change between 2024/25 and 2025/26 and then to 2026/27), the coming two years see a ‘flat cash’ position, with the overall funding remaining around £11.5m per year, and so no uplift for inflationary funding being included.



3.3.4 Detail of indicative Core Spending Power from 2026/27 Financial Settlement. This highlights how the increase in council tax across all years is offset in the coming two years (2028/29 and 2029/30) by reductions in government funding.

Maldon					
Illustrative Core Spending Power of Local Government					
	2024-25 £ millions	2025-26 £ millions	2026-27 £ millions	2027-28 £ millions	2028-29 £ millions
Fair Funding Allocation	-	-	4.431	3.945	3.435
Baseline Funding Level	-	-	1.570	1.606	1.638
Revenue Support Grant	-	-	2.861	2.339	1.796
Legacy Funding Assessment	4.603	4.670	-	-	-
Legacy Business Rates	3.182	3.446	-	-	-
Legacy Grant Funding	1.421	1.224	-	-	-
Council tax requirement	5.947	6.230	6.536	6.856	7.192
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse	0.156	0.183	0.341	0.378	0.399
Total Transitional Protections	-	-	0.117	0.283	0.457
95% income protection	-	-	-	-	-
100% income protection	-	-	0.117	0.283	0.457
Grants rolled in to Revenue Support Grant[12]	0.151	0.183	-	-	-
Adjustment Support Grant	-	-	0.129	-	-
Core Spending Power	**10.856**	**11.266**	**11.553**	**11.461**	**11.482**

3.4 Impact of LGR

3.4.1 Previously, LGR had been expected to lead to the end of the Council as a statutory public body in April 2028 – which caps financial risks and opens alternative ways to handle those risks. However, the recently announced review of the decision means that there remains some uncertainty over the timing of LGR. This Council must therefore proceed on the assumption that LGR takes place (as indicated in the 'rewiring the state' policy statement made by the Prime Minister) while also preparing a position that would be sustainable in the event that LGR is deferred or delayed. For planning purposes, it is now assumed that the effective date will be moved to April 2029.

3.5 Options

3.5.1 This presents some high-level options for the financial strategy of the Council. These are set out below. Based on Member consideration at the Finance Working Group, option 3 is recommended.

Option	Considerations	Recommendation
1 – Use of Reserves **(Budget shortfall is funded from reserves.)**	This would leave a significant gap to be dealt with by the successor authority (under LGR) or by the council (if LGR is delayed or deferred). Eventually, savings or spending reductions would be required.	Reject. This option defers addressing the problem in a way that increases the problem.

Option	Considerations	Recommendation
2 – Savings/cuts **(Budget shortfall is met through savings or cuts.)**	Residents and partner organisations would not be well served if cuts were applied to balance base budgets despite reserves being available. The services passed to a successor under LGR, or retained if LGR was delayed or deferred, would be struggling and possibly unfit for purpose.	Reject. This option would retain funds available yet see services reduced.
3 – Blend of reserves (1) and savings (2) **(Budget shortfall is reduced through review of budget structures, with any remaining gap being funded from reserves.)**	This solution would see steps taken to reduce the budget shortfall with the balance remaining being funded from reserves. This keeps a balance between good service delivery and prudent use of reserves. It either passes 'fit for purpose' council services to a successor or enables the council to continue in a sustainable manner if needed.	Accept. This balances cost control with appropriate use of reserves. It plans to secure good service delivery now and in the future for residents in a sustainable manner.

3.6 **Proposed strategy**

3.6.1 Developing option 3, a viable financial strategy is therefore proposed which combines elements of budget review, savings, and cost control, with prudent use of reserves.

3.6.2 This would secure two key policy objectives identified by Members:

1) that the Council prepares properly for LGR and is ready for its services to be handed over in good order; and

2) ensuring a locally sustainable financial base should LGR be delayed or deferred.

3.6.3 An updated summary MTFS is set out below (with detail in **APPENDIX 1**). This updated summary includes funding based on the known indicative values for Core Spending Power and the current estimates for inflation pressures.

Operational Budgets	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**	**2029/30**
	£000s	**£000s**	**£000s**	**£000s**
Net Cost of Services	**13,096.1**	**14,185.4**	**15,304.4**	**16,423.4**
Total non-service budgets	**(824.1)**	**(600.0)**	**(500.0)**	**(350.0)**
Net operational spending	**12,272.0**	**13,585.4**	**14,804.4**	**16,073.4**

Funding	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	**2029/30**
	£000s	**£000s**	**£000s**	**£000s**
Core Spending Power	(11,554.0)	(11,462.0)	(11,483.0)	(9,893.3)
EPR Funding	(698.7)	(698.7)	(698.7)	(698.7)
Reserves funding	(19.3)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Funding	**(12,272.0)**	**(12,160.7)**	**(12,181.7)**	**(10,592.0)**
gap	**0.0**	**1,424.7**	**2,622.7**	**5,481.4**

3.7 **Strategy implementation**

3.7.1 Further to Member discussion, it is recommended that Officers are tasked with scrutinising the 2026/27 budgets and forecast actual spending to identify options to reduce the predicted gap arising through inflation and other factors.

3.7.2 To secure a balance of financial prudence and service resilience it is proposed to target spending reductions (or income increases) in order that the net cost of services is reduced towards the level of core spending power plus EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) funding (around £12.2m), with the balance being funded from general reserves.

3.7.3 Options to support reducing the gap include

(i) removing planned spending where this is not fully aligned to corporate objectives including LGR readiness

(ii) moving some budget provision out of ongoing base budgets and into earmarked reserves where these budgets are to be used for unpredictable, periodic costs (such as appealed planning decisions).

(iii) fees and charges can also be reviewed to identify options to increase incomes, for example where a freeze in a tariff leads to increased take-up and so increased overall income

(iv) review of how government grants are being applied to spending to maximise use of grant funding.

3.7.4 Given the size of the Council, it is quite possible to keep clear oversight of planned spending across the whole authority and to review spending plans as the year develops. This will support clarity in understanding all aspects of spending and facilitate robust cost control. Services will not be at risk as there will be no specific targets applied for savings. Rather, the basic ongoing expenditure of the Council can be scrutinised and more closely managed.

3.7.5 These steps are aligned to the new organisational structure in place from April 2026 and the changes that have arisen as a result of the Council Annual General Meeting (Statutory Annual Council) in May.

3.8 **Next steps**

3.8.1 It is proposed that officers are requested to undertake a detailed scrutiny of planned spending and to engage proactively in peer-to-peer ‘check and challenge’ of spending plans. This will build on the progress made already in creating consistent staffing structures and ensuring that SLT is at the heart of delivering political priorities. It is also proposed that revised budgets are presented to the Committee in November 2026, including options to reduce base budgets and overall planned spending while ensuring that needed and valued services continue to be available to residents.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 This report presents proposed steps to be undertaken by officers in preparation for budget setting for 2026/27 further to discussion of policy priorities with Members.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 **Delivering good quality services**

5.1.1 The report presents options for delivering good quality services while also enhancing overall cost control.

6. IMPLICATIONS

(i) **Impact on Customers** – There should be no noticeable impact on customers, other than the available funding be more effectively deployed.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None directly.

(iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – The report highlights key risks and how these may be mitigated.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The subject of the report.

(v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None directly – proposed activity will be undertaken through a refocusing of current resources not through a new workstream being developed.

(vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** – The proposals in this report will support sufficient preparation for LGR while ensuring that the Council remains sustainable in the even that LGR is delayed or deferred.

Background papers: None.

Enquiries to: Ben Jay, Director of Finance.

APPENDIX 1

Medium Term Financial Strategy Update as at September 2026

Operational Budgets	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s	2028/29 £000s	2029/30 £000s
Technical changes:				
Base budget brought forward	13,080.3	13,096.1	14,185.4	15,304.4
Virement reversals	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reversal of prior year one-off growth	(206.3)	(479.7)	0.0	0.0
Inflation:				
Increase in Salaries	540.1	840.0	840.0	840.0
Contract Inflation (incl. Waste)	712.3	796.0	796.0	796.0
Fees & Charges/other	(433.5)	(517.0)	(517.0)	(517.0)
Base budget after technical and unavoidable pressures	**13,692.9**	**13,735.4**	**15,304.4**	**16,423.4**
Savings and Growth:				
Savings	(824.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Recurrent Pressures and Growth	1,198.7	450.0	0.0	0.0
Non-recurrent Growth	479.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reserve Funding for growth	(1,451.2)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Cost of Services	**13,096.1**	**14,185.4**	**15,304.4**	**16,423.4**
Investment Income	(800.0)	(600.0)	(500.0)	(350.0)
Collection fund (surplus)/ deficit from PFY	(24.1)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total non-service budgets	**(824.1)**	**(600.0)**	**(500.0)**	**(350.0)**
Net operational spending	**12,272.0**	**13,585.4**	**14,804.4**	**16,073.4**

Funding	2026-27 £000s	2027-28 £000s	2028-29 £000s	2029/30 £000s
Estimated Yield from Council Tax	(6,536.0)	(6,856.0)	(7,192.0)	(6,521.7)
Fair Funding allocation	(4,431.0)	(3,945.0)	(3,435.0)	(2,941.0)
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and	(341.0)	(378.0)	(399.0)	(430.7)
Transitional protections	(246.0)	(283.0)	(457.0)	0.0
New Homes Bonus	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Core Spending Power	(11,554.0)	(11,462.0)	(11,483.0)	(9,893.3)
EPR Funding	(698.7)	(698.7)	(698.7)	(698.7)
Reserves funding	(19.3)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Funding	**(12,272.0)**	**(12,160.7)**	**(12,181.7)**	**(10,592.0)**
gap	**0.0**	**1,424.7**	**2,622.7**	**5,481.4**

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REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
24 SEPTEMBER 2026

DISCRETIONARY FEES AND CHARGES POLICIES 2027 / 28

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the overarching principles through which Discretionary Fees and Charges will be set for 2027/28 financial year.

1.2 The detailed schedule of Fees and Charges will be updated based on these policies and brought forward alongside the budget proposals for 2027/28. The Strategy and Resources Committee will consider both the detailed schedule of fees and charges and the overall budget before agreeing any required changes and recommending the updated papers to the Council for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the overarching principles for discretionary Fees and Charges policies at 3.2.2 of this report be approved.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Not all fees and charges are set locally. A large proportion are set nationally. For nationally set fees and charges the Council is required to advertise and apply the charges in line with national guidance.

3.2 **Discretionary Fees and Charges – Policy Considerations**

3.2.1 For locally set (‘discretionary’) fees and charges, the Council will follow the timetable below:

- September – confirmation of principles
- November – proposals for changes (revised tariffs, new or deleted tariffs) to be presented to the Committee
- December – finalisation of proposals to be included within budget plans for the new year.

3.2.2 Throughout, the following factors need to be considered in setting charges for the coming year:

Ref	Principle	Commentary
A	Annual review	All discretionary fees and charges should be reviewed annually in terms of the tariff applied, recent activity trends, and the overall income achieved.
B	Promote	The Council exists to provide important services to local

Ref	Principle	Commentary
	access to services	people. Fees and charges should be applied in a way that promotes access to discretionary services. They should not be a barrier to services.
C	Full cost recovery	Fees and charges for council services should be set on the basis of full cost recovery. That is, charges should be calculated such that all costs are recovered as part of the overall charge – direct delivery costs, indirect service management costs and overhead support costs (such as ICT, HR (Human Resources), accommodation etc.).
D	Non-profit making	Fees and charges are calculated to recover the full cost of the service provided, not to make a surplus or profit. Some cross subsidy may occur between charges levied in the same service area, but the overall objective is to support the cost of discretionary services not to secure a commercial profit.
E	Income = tariff x take up	The tariff or charge applied is one part of a wider value chain. The other part is the activity volume. Together, tariff and volume generate the overall income to the Council.
F	Standard +2% uplift	The MTFS (Medium-Term Financial Strategy) assumes a standard uplift of 2% per year on income from fees and charges. This may mean that • all charges increase by 2% per year; or • that some charges increase by more (or less) than 2%, with an expected overall increase of 2%; or • that activity is expected to increase by 2% in order to secure and overall income increase of 2% with no change to the tariff applied. However, where actual inflationary pressures are higher than 2%, it is expected that income is similarly increased to maintain the full cost recovery approach.
G	Inclusive	Options for concessionary reductions in fees and charges can be considered in line with wider council policies. How concessions are evidenced and applied should be simple, efficient and appropriate.
H	Benchmarked	The level of charges set be compared to similar charges levied by local commercial competitors or other local authorities.
I	Flexible over time	Annual review of fees and charges should also consider the introduction of new charges or the rescinding of old charges.
J	Consistent with other policies	Consistency between fees and charges and other wider policies and strategies of the council, including the corporate plan objectives.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The fees and charges policies will inform the setting of the 2027/28 fees and charges, which will be brought to a subsequent Committee.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 **Delivering good quality services.**

5.1.1 Regular review and updating of fees and charges ensure that the delivery of discretionary services is done in a way that is accessible and recovers the costs of service delivery in an appropriate and proportionate way.

6. IMPLICATIONS

(i) **Impact on Customers** – Clear approaches to discretionary service charges promote trust in council services.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Appropriately inclusive charges for discretionary services helps ensure equity of access to all residents.

(iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – None directly.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Fees and charges are an important part of the Council’s income.

(v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None directly.

(vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – In due course the fees and charges applied by this Council will be reviewed and revised as part of transition to a new Council. A clear policy approach to locally determined fees and charges will facilitate this process.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to: Ben Jay, Director of Finance.

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