



Thursday 29 January 2026

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter
Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member
for Finance, HR and Economic
Development

Fees and Charges Proposals 2026/27

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To set out the proposed fees and charges for the financial year 2026/27.

Recommendations

Council is asked to:

- 1. Approve the discretionary Fees and Charges for 2026/27 set out at Appendix A (Part A).**
- 2. Approve the discretionary Fees and Charges for 2026/27 set out at Appendix A (Part B)**
- 3. Note the statutory Fees and Charges for 2026/27 set out at Appendix B.**
- 4. Approve the Charging Policy set out in Appendix C.**
- 5. Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer in consultation with Leader of the Council, Cabinet member for Finance, HR and Economic Development to set the commercial charges for Building Control.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? **No**

What are the relevant corporate priorities? **All**

Which wards are impacted? **All Wards**

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The financial implications of the proposals are incorporated into the draft budget for 2026/27. Any changes to the proposed fees and charges as set out in the report will have an impact on the proposed Budget Framework which is scheduled to be presented to Council for approval on 26 February 2026.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 Any legal implications associated with this report are referenced in the body of the report.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Fees and charges are a key element of the Council's funding. They generate approximately £8.5m towards the delivery costs for specific services. In order to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to fee setting, the principles and criteria set out in the Charging Policy have been applied.
- 2.2 The Council makes charges for a wide range of services. These charges are either discretionary (set by the Council) or under statutory powers (set by the Government). The two categories are defined as follows:
 - **Discretionary** – These are charges local authorities can set independently. When setting discretionary fees and charges, the Council's approach should be clear and in line with the principles set out in the Charging Policy.
 - **Statutory** – These charges are set by central government; therefore it cannot be assumed that they will change annually in line with other fees and charges set by the Council. Nevertheless, the income received from statutory charges contributes to the overall financial position of the Council.

Discretionary Charges

2.3 The proposed discretionary charges were discussed at the Budget – Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 13 January 2026. Feedback from that meeting was considered by Cabinet on 15 January 2026.

Two specific areas have been reviewed and amended:

HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) – Licensing Charges

2.4 In response to feedback from Members, a further review of HMO Licence Fees has been undertaken to ensure: a) full cost recovery; and b) the fee structure accurately reflects the variation in the sizes of HMO premises.

2.5 This review has included analysis of:

- benchmarking data to compare South Kesteven's fees and charges with those of our statistical and geographical neighbours.
- and a review of the time incurred by the Council in undertaking the necessary application, inspection and determination process for the issuing of a licence. Analysis was undertaken to determine the variation in application categories specifically the number of bedrooms in any application.

2.6 As a result of the review, it is proposed to introduce a sliding scale of fees linked to the number of bedrooms within each HMO. Furthermore, proposed fees for licence renewals have been increased, also with a sliding scale.

Green Waste Charges

2.7 The proposal included in the report that was debated at the Budget – Joint OSC was to support a £1.50 increase for the first bin and a 50p increase for all subsequent bins.

2.8 This proposed increase was set within the context of potential changes to the frequency of collection, specifically the cessation of collections during January and February. This suggestion was prompted by data showing very low tonnages of green waste are collected in the winter.

2.9 The proposed changes to the green waste service were presented to the Environment OSC on 13 January 2026 as part of a revised Waste Policy. The Committee did vote narrowly in favour of the revised policy, but Members expressed a range of concerns.

2.10 On 15 January 2026, Cabinet considered feedback from the OSC and decided not to proceed with changes to the collection arrangements at this time. Instead, in order to move towards cost recovery, it is proposed to increase charges by **£2.00** per household for the first bin and **£1.50** for all additional bins.

2.11 The overall approach to fee setting for 2026/27 is to ensure increases in charges contribute towards the costs of delivering services. A summary of the proposed increases is outlined in **Table 1** below with a detailed breakdown shown at **Appendix A (Parts A and B)**.

Table 1 – Summary Fees and Charges Proposals

HEADING	PROPOSAL FOR 2026/27	INCORPORATION OF POLICY PRINCIPLES
Arts Centres	Changes to charges are based on competitive pricing against alternative local options	Cost recovery or market comparisons
Bus Stations	0%	Subsidised – no increase is proposed to encourage bus operators to make use of the bus stations for passengers
Car parking charges	0%	Tariff changes were introduced in January 2025 and will be subject to a post implementation review in February 2026.
Markets	0% Charges waived for Bourne during 26/27 while Town Hall works are underway	Subsidised
Waste Services	£2 increase for first green waste bin and £1 increase for subsequent bins	Cost Recovery
Pre-planning advice and street naming and numbering charges	Increase by 4%	Cost Recovery
Environmental Health	Full cost recovery analysis has resulted in some charges being reduced	Cost Recovery
Grantham Cemetery	Increase by 5%	Cost Recovery

Leisure Centres	LeisureSK Ltd may increase charges to an upper limit of 3%.	Market analysis to be undertaken with other competitors will be used to set fee levels.
Licencing	Full cost recovery analysis undertaken	Cost Recovery
HMO Licences	Introduction of new scale of fees depending upon size of HMO establishment	Cost Recovery
Street Trading	New Charge	Benchmarking undertaken with other local authorities
Community rooms & guest rooms (HRA)	Increase by 3.8%	This is in line with CPI for rent setting as part of the HRA but a review of facilities underway and report recommending options expected during 2026/27 which may alter the charges in year.

Arts Centres

2.12 These charges have been benchmarked against alternative local options to ensure costs are recovered wherever possible and competitively set where appropriate.

Bus Stations

2.13 It is proposed that there is no increase in the bus operator departure charges for 2026/27. This is to encourage bus operators to use the bus stations for travelling passengers.

Car Parking

2.14 Car parking charges for all Council operated pay and display car parks were reviewed during 2024, leading to the introduction of the current charges on 20 January 2025. It was agreed to review the impact of the new tariffs after a 6-month period. The results of this will be considered by the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2026. No changes are therefore proposed at this time.

Street Markets

- 2.15 It is recognised that the weekly markets in Bourne, Grantham and Stamford are an integral element of the economic vibrancy of each town. Recovery and rejuvenation of the markets is well underway following the implementation of the Market Action Plan.
- 2.16 In order to consolidate this recovery (particularly at Grantham), it is recommended that charges are not increased in 2026/27. For Bourne, it is proposed to waive charges during 2026/27 during restoration of Bourne Town Hall takes place because these works are likely to be disruptive. Suspending the charge should encourage traders to continue to operate during this period.

Waste Services

- 2.17 The current charges and proposed increased charges in respect of bulky waste and green waste charges are shown in **Table 2 below**: These have been increased in order to maintain the principle of cost recovery for delivery of this service.

Table 2 – Proposed Bulky Waste and Green Waste Charges

	2025/26 Current	2026/27 Proposed
Bulk household items – first item	£21	£22
-each additional item	£11	£12
Provision of Green Bin (all new or additional bins)	£29	£30
Delivery of bins	£14	£15
Annual Collection Charge (first bin)	£53	£55
Annual Collection Charge (each subsequent bin)	£44	£45

Licensing

- 2.18 Taxi Licence charges have been reviewed in line with a new proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. It is proposed to implement these new charges with effect from 1 February 2026.
- 2.19 A new Street Trading Permit charge linked to the refreshed Street Trading Policy is proposed for 2026/27. The refreshed policy is due to be presented to the Cabinet in March 2026 and, subject to the decision, a new charge may be introduced.

Discretionary Planning Charges

2.20 In line with the Charging Policy various fees including Pre-Planning Advice and Street Name and Numbering have been increased in line with inflationary service cost pressures. These have been calculated at **4%**, to maintain the principle of cost recovery. However, there are others which, after undertaking a review of current processes have resulted in some charge reductions.

Environmental Health

2.21 As part of the budget setting process a review of the Environmental Health fees has been undertaken. The outcome of this has resulted in proposals for some charges to be reduced, and others increased, to ensure they accurately reflect the cost of undertaking each service.

Cemetery

2.22 Charges have been increased by **5%** to ensure cost recovery for this service.

Leisure Centres

2.23 The Council is able to set an upper limit for leisure centre charges. These proposed to be increased by 3% for 2026/27. LeisureSK Ltd can increase up to that limit. The company will benchmark against competitor organisations when setting fee levels.

Service charges

2.24 In line with previous years these charges have been increased by CPI in line with the HRA rent setting process at **3.8%**. However, a review of facilities and usage of service charges in sheltered housing schemes is currently being undertaken and a report recommending options is expected to be presented to Members during 2026/27. This will cover communal rooms, guest rooms and laundry charges. Once the review is finalised an updated schedule of charges maybe proposed accordingly.

2.25 Full details of the proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2026/27 are shown at **Appendix A (parts A and B)**.

Building Control

2.26 These fees are commercially sensitive and set in conjunction with East Midlands Building Consultancy (EMBC) Board who operate the service for the three authorities. It is proposed to delegate authority for setting fees related to EMBC to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development.

Regulatory Charges

- 2.27 Details of the regulatory fees and charges for 2026/27 are shown at **Appendix B**.
- 2.28 Planning charges are expected to be increased by Government in line with CPI (Consumer Price Index) as at September 2025 (which was **3.8%**). Formal confirmation of any increase is expected by March 2026.
- 2.29 Statutory Licencing charges have remained unchanged for several years and there are currently no announcements with respect to any proposed increases. It is therefore expected these charges will remain as outlined in **Appendix B** for 2026/27.

Charging Policy

- 2.30 The setting of fees and charges is incorporated within the medium-term financial planning and budget setting process. An integral purpose of fee setting is to meet specific objectives and priorities of the Corporate Plan. The Charging Policy sets out an overall policy framework to support and practical guide in the approach to the setting of fees and charges.
- 2.31 Following an internal audit recommendation, the Policy has been reviewed and updated. This is attached at **Appendix C**.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The key considerations are outlined within section 2 of the report.

4. Other options considered

- 4.1 The alternative options are considered as part of the report in section 2.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Fees and charges are an integral part of the budget setting process and are reviewed on an annual basis.

6 Consultation

- 6.1 The proposed Fees and charges were presented to The Budget – Joint OSC on the 13 January 2026 for consideration and feedback to Cabinet
- 6.2 Taxi licences were also reviewed by the Environment OSC on 13 January 2026.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 **Appendix A (Part A)** – Proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges with a potential Disclosable Pecuniary Interest
- 7.2 **Appendix A (Part B)** – Proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges without a potential Disclosable Pecuniary Interest
- 7.2 **Appendix B** – Statutory Fees and Charges
- 7.3 **Appendix C** – Charging Policy