

Item No:	Classification: OPEN	Date: 17 September 2015	Meeting Name: Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:		Call-in: Fees and Charges report (Supplementary) for Environment and Leisure Department for 2015/16 (Cabinet Member for Environment and the Public Realm 18 August 2015)	
Ward(s) or Group affected:		All wards	
From:		Head of Overview & Scrutiny	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. On 18 August 2015 the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Public Realm considered a report on the Fees and Charges report (Supplementary) for Environment and Leisure Department for 2015/16 (attached as an Appendix).
2. The Cabinet Member for Environment and the Public Realm:
 - a. Approved the additional proposed non-statutory fees and charges for 2015/16 detailed in this report, with an implementation date of 1 October 2015.
3. This is a supplementary fees and charges report for services provided by the Environment and Leisure Department and is an addition to those fees and charges approved in March 2015.

REASONS FOR CALL-IN

4. On 4 September 2015 three members of the committee (Councillor Rosie Shimell, the Vice-Chair, and Councillors Anood Al-Samerai and Lisa Rajan) requested a call-in of the decisions on the following grounds:

- Reference to the policy framework

This policy was not included specifically in the proposed fee increases in the 2015-2016 council budget agreed by Council Assembly in February. There is also likely to be additional and unbudgeted expenditure required tackling any increase in fly tipping as a direct result of the new fee.

- Clarity of aims and desired outcome

The aim of introducing a fee for bulky waste collection will have an undesired outcome on street cleanliness levels. The LGA announced, this week, that flytipping across 200 councils, has increased by 16% in the last 3 years at the same time as councils have stopped providing free collections.

The report also suggests an aim that charging for bulk waste collections will lead people to donate old goods to charity. There is no evidence to support this suggestion and it is not clear why this has appeared as an aim of the council.

- Presumption in favour of openness

The Opposition Spokesperson for the Environment and the Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny contacted the Cabinet Member prior to his making this decision to request a conversation about evidence from other boroughs and the effect on those on the lowest incomes. No response was received despite a clear request for an 'open' conversation.

- Link between strategy and implementation

The Medium Term Resources Strategy states that fees and charges should not be raised to average levels unless this conflicts with council policy, leads to adverse financial implications or impacts on vulnerable residents. This decision does not refer to any evidence or reason for how implementation of fees does not fall into these categories. In fact, the omission of any reassurance on this point suggests that there is none and evidence from DEFRA and the LGA suggest that implementing the MTRS in this case would lead to maintaining free bulk refuse collections.

Other concerns

There is no evidence about the impact of introducing collection fees in other boroughs even though the fact that other boroughs do it is a justification. Paragraph 4 of the report explains that this decision was delayed so that the system for accepting payments for bulk waste collection was prepared. This suggests that the council had already decided it was going to start charging for bulk refuse collections before properly issuing the decision.

This decision will have more impact on people on low incomes and people who do not have cars. It will have an environmental impact and fails to protect residents or streets. Other boroughs have given discounts or exemptions for vulnerable residents such as pensioners. Southwark's report doesn't even consider doing this.

CALL-IN MEETING

5. The committee will consider the call-in request and whether or not the decision might be contrary to the policy framework or not wholly in accordance with the budget.
6. If, having considered the decision and all relevant advice, the committee is still concerned about it then it may either:
 - a) refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns, or
 - b) refer the matter to council assembly if the decision is deemed to be outside the policy and budget framework.
7. If the committee does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body, the decision shall take effect on the date of the scrutiny meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held at	Contact
None		

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny		
Report Author	Fitzroy Williams, Scrutiny Project Assistant		
Version	Final		
Dated	7 September 2015		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included	