APPENDIX 1

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

FEES & CHARGES POLICY

June 2026

Introduction / Purpose

1.1 This policy sets out Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's approach to establishing, reviewing, and applying fees and charges for services. It provides a consistent, transparent and equitable framework that supports:

- Financial sustainability and effective medium term financial planning
- Fairness between service users and council taxpayers
- Accessibility and social equality in line with the Marmot Principles
- The Council's strategic priorities including the Corporate Plan, prevention and early intervention
- The ethos and commitments within the Community Deal

1.2 The Council faces significant financial pressures due to rising demand, increasing costs and wider economic challenges. Fees and charges are an important source of income, supporting service sustainability and helping to protect frontline services.

1.3 The Council provides a wide range of chargeable services such as adult care, planning and development control, licensing, to name but a few. When fees & charges are implemented, service users pay some or all the cost of delivery. But when no charges are made, council taxpayers in general are subsidising the cost of delivery – potentially at the expense of the provision of another essential service to other Council residents.

1.4 For some services, fees are set or restricted by national legislation. Where the Council has discretion, charges will be determined in accordance with the principles set out in this policy.

1.5 Fees and charges made up 4.6% of the Council's gross revenue budget for 2026/2027, raising £13.6m from the public, businesses and other organisations.

1.6 The policy aims to balance cost recovery with social justice, ensuring that pricing structures do not widen inequalities and that essential services remain accessible to residents who need them.

1.7 The Policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years or as required following legislative changes.

1.8 This Policy is not designed to replace existing processes for Community Asset Transfers (CAT). Any requests for occupation of a space for the medium to long term should be considered under the relevant CAT policy.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all Council services that levy fees & charges to individuals, community groups, businesses and other organisations. This includes:

- Discretionary services where the Council has the power to charge,
- Commercially traded discretionary services provided on a cost recovery basis
- Statutory services where charging is either required or permitted.

2.2 Table 1 and 2 below details the different types of fees and charges operating currently:

Table 1 - Statutory Services

Type	Example
Statutory - Charges prescribed directly by legislation	Planning Fees, Social Care - Fairer Charging
Statutory –Legislation prohibits charging	Education

Table 2 – Discretionary Services

Type	Example
Full Cost Recovery – Service delivery fully funded by income from Fees & Charges	Trade Waste
Subsidised / Nominal Charge – The service is funded through the Council's revenue budget and income from Fees & Charges	Meals on Wheels, School Meals, bulky waste collection, Green Waste Bags – Administration charge
No charge - Free for service users, fully funded through the Council's revenue budget (Council Taxpayers)	Garden Waste collection, car parking
Commercial – Maximising revenue to generate funding for the Council	Rental/lease income e.g. Retail Park
Concessions & Exemptions – Should only be used if community led, promote equity, increase access to services and deliver outcomes that support the Deal Principles	Community led initiatives delivered by Community Groups, Sports Clubs etc. – Exemptions Policy attached at Annex 1.

3. Principles

3.1 All fees & Charges must be developed and applied in accordance with the following principles:

- **Fairness & Equity -** Charges should fairly reflect the balance between users benefiting from services and the general taxpayer subsidising them.

- **Affordability and Access -** Fees will be set with consideration for the Council's duties under the Equality Act and to ensure services remain accessible, particularly for vulnerable or low income.

- **Full Cost Transparency -** Charges should be based on a clear and consistent assessment of the full cost of delivery.

- **Financial Sustainability -** Fees and charges should support medium term financial planning and the sustainable delivery of Council services.

- **Encouraging Responsible Behaviour -** Charges (including penalties) may be used to influence behaviour and reduce demand for certain services where appropriate.

- **Revenue generation is a benefit, not a driver -** The primary purpose of charging is fairness and sustainability; income generation alone will not justify the introduction of a charge.

- **Concessions and Exemptions -** These may be offered to community led initiatives where they deliver community value, support equity, or deliver outcomes in line with the Deal & Marmot principles. The Concessions and Exemptions Policy is at Annex 1.

4. Full Cost Recovery

4.1 Where full cost recovery is the objective, service areas must calculate the true cost of the service provision.

4.2 When estimating the cost of providing a service, consideration needs to be given to the previous year's actual expenditure, demand levels and current year's budget and benchmarking data (where applicable).

Table 3 – Full Cost Recovery

What to Consider When Calculating the Cost of Delivery		
Costs arising as a direct result of the Service being delivered		
Staffing costs including pay, overtime, employers National Insurance and Pension contributions	Transport costs – mileage; vehicle costs	Supplies and Services – materials, equipment
Indirect costs required to deliver the service		
Building Costs / Administration Building Recharge – Energy costs, maintenance costs, repairs, depreciation	Management Costs	Corporate support services Finance, OD, IT etc

4.3 Corporate Support Services will be based on the Councils' staff support recharges. Prior year allocations can be used plus an inflationary uplift.

5. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

5.1 All fees and charges will comply with relevant legislation:

- Local Government Act 2003 – Section 93 contains powers for all local authorities to charge for "discretionary services", whilst Section 95 permits local authorities to engage in commercial trading activity and to generate surpluses,
- Localism Act 2011 introduced a new General Power of Competence (PGPC), which explicitly gives Councils the power to do anything that an individual can do which is not expressly prohibited by other legislation. This can include charging for activity undertaken for a commercial purpose,
- Care Act 2014 (where applicable),

- Compliance with waste regulations relating to the use, sorting and disposal of materials,
- Any other relevant legislation or statutory guidance.

5.2 Legal advice must be sought where:

- New fees and charges are being proposed,
- Concessions or exemptions may interact with subsidy control rules. Any economic advantage to an organisation may fall within the scope of the Subsidy Control Act, meaning they must be assessed to ensure they do not constitute a subsidy or breach the subsidy control principles.

6. **Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

- **Responsibilities**:

  - Heads of Service and Service Managers must review and propose fees and charges annually, supported by Financial Services. Consideration needs to be given to the level of inflation, the revenue budget and costs (full cost recovery), benchmarking data, new charges,
  - Financial Services maintain the central Register of Fees & Charges, which will be updated annually and published on the Council's website,
  - Service Managers and Heads of Service may apply the Exemption and Concessions Policy.

- **Governance**:
  - All proposed changes to/new Fees and Charges will be approved by Council annually prior to the commencement of the financial year to which they apply,
  - Each service area must maintain a register of exemptions or waivers, which are to be submitted to Financial Services on a quarterly basis for reporting to Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council when applicable.

- **Implementation**: Heads of Service will be responsible for implementing the fees & charges.

- **Collection of fees & charges** – Payments must be made upfront / at the point of sale where possible using the Council's website or the Contact Centre. Where invoices are required, these need to be raised and dispatched at the earliest opportunity. Income recovery and debt management will be the responsibility of the Council's Revenue Section.

- **Monitoring**: Income generation will be monitored as part of the Council's budget monitoring framework.

- **Transparency**: All fees and charges must be published and easily accessible to service users.

7. Equality and Accessibility

7.1 The Council will ensure that fees and charges do not disproportionately impact on individuals with protected characteristics or low-income households.

7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) must be undertaken:

- For new fees or charges,
- For charges resulting in significant increases,
- Where there is potential unequal impact.

8. Policy Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required by legislative. Budgetary changes or strategic priorities.

ANNEX 1

Concessions & Exemptions Policy – Community Led Initiatives

1. Introduction / Purpose

1.1 This Appendix sets out the Council's approach to awarding concessions or exemptions to fees & charges for community-led initiatives. The purpose of the concessions and exemptions framework is to:

- Support activities that reduce health and social inequalities and improve wellbeing (Marmot aligned),
- Support prevention and early intervention – strengthening community capacity and resilience,
- Enable residents, groups and organisations to design and lead activities /services within their communities,
- Maintain financial prudence and transparency, ensuring concessions are targeted, justified and providing clear community benefit,
- Ensure exemptions and waivers remain lawful, proportionate and aligned with the Council's strategic priorities and the Community Deal.

2. Scope

2.1 The Fees & Charges included in scope are:

- Discretionary fees and charges for Council services, facilities, venues or equipment where the Council is permitted to vary or waive the charge.

The Fees & Charges excluded are:

- Statutory Charges where legislation prescribes the fee,
- Commercial services delivered on a full cost basis e.g. Trade Waste,
- Civil penalties, fines, enforcement costs.

3. Definitions

3.1 **Not-for-Profit (NFP):**

A formally constituted organisation that reinvest any surplus funds back into the organisation:

- Has a formal legal structure,
- Charity,
- Often employs staff and manages larger budgets,
- Purpose – for social good, not for profit distribution.

3.2 **Community Group:**

A locally based, volunteer-led group to support a neighbourhood, interest group or local cause. They may or may not have a legal structure:

- Usually small, voluntary, grass roots groups,
- Run entirely by unpaid volunteers,
- Small budgets, based on grants, donations or fund raising,
- Focussed on local activities such as sports, community centres, wellbeing,
- Not always eligible for charity status or formal grant funding unless they adopt a formal structure.

3.3 **Sports Clubs:**

Not formally a community group in the legal or organisational sense but provides community activities and encourages local involvement.

3.4 **Community Led Initiative:**

An activity, project, programme or service that is initiated, designed, governed, and primarily driven by the community itself, rather than by the Council or a commercial organisation and where any charges applied are set to enable sustainability rather than profit.

3.5 **Concession:**

A full waiver or partial reduction of an otherwise applicable fee/charge.

3.6 **Marmot Alignment:**

Activities addressing the wider social determinants of health such as early years, education/skills, employment, income, healthy places, prevention.

3.7 **Community Deal Alignment:**

Activities co-produced with residents that build on community assets, encourage participation, and shift to prevention/early help.

4. Principles for Awarding Concessions and Exemptions

4.1 When determining whether concessions or exemptions should be applied, the following principles must be considered:

1. Community Leadership and Control

- The initiative is initiated and led by residents and reflect local priorities,
- Key decisions are made by the community, not the council or a commercial body,
- The Council's role is enabling, supporting, or partnering in line with the Deal principles.

2. Community ownership and accountability

- The initiative is led by a constituted community organisation, voluntary group, social enterprise or a clearly identifiable group,
- There are clear arrangements in place for accountability and safeguarding.

3. Clear Community Benefit – contribution to the Deal

- The primary purpose is to deliver social, environmental, cultural, or economic benefit to the community,
- Benefits are locally beneficial and non-commercial,
- Any income generated is reinvested for community benefit.

4. Evidence of local need and support

- The initiative responds to a locally identified need or opportunity within a defined place or community,
- There is evidence of community support or involvement (eg. Participation, endorsement, co-design).

5. Appropriate relationship with the council

- The initiative does not replace a statutory Council service,
- Delivery is not council-led although it may be co-produced in line with the Deal,
- Funding supports added value or innovation, and not replace a council delivered service.

6. Prevention and early intervention

- Prevents / reduce demand on services,
- Supports early intervention,
- Reduces reliance on council services.

7. Financial viability, sustainability and value for money

- Realistic plans for sustainability,
- Income generation or transition to full/partial charging,
- Efficient use of council resources,
- Concessions should not duplicate funding from other sources.

8. Equality, inclusions and access

- Activities should support disadvantaged groups,
- Removes barriers to participation,
- Improves wellbeing.

9. Legal Compliance

- Comply with relevant legislation and guidance (e.g charging powers, subsidy control, data protection – refer to Section 5 of Policy).

5. Assessment Process

5.1 Each application will be assessed against the following weighted criteria:

Criterion	Description	Weight
Marmot Alignment	Degree to which activity targets social determinants (early years, education/skills, employment, income, healthy environments, prevention).	25%
Community Deal Alignment	Co-production, volunteering, asset-based approach, community leadership.	20%
Inclusion & Reach	Access for low-income/priority groups; geographic spread; barriers removed.	15%
Outcomes & Prevention	Clear outputs/outcomes; evidenced prevention/early help; reduction in demand on services.	20%
Financial Need & Leverage	Ability to pay; reserves; match funding secured; VFM.	10%
Deliverability & Safeguarding	Governance, risk, safeguarding, insurance, capacity.	10%

5.2 **Decision Bands (Total Score out of 100):**

Score	Decision
80 - 100	Full waiver or 75-100% reduction
60 - 79	50–75% reduction
40 - 59	Up to 50% reduction or capped rate
< 40	Not eligible

5.3 The Application Form attached at Annex 2 and should be returned to the Joint Civil Contingencies Manager and assessed by the Events Safety Advisory Group and reviewed and approved by the Head of Service / Strategic Director.

5.4 **Monitoring & Review**

5.5 A register of exemptions should be maintained and submitted to the relevant Finance Business Partner on a quarterly basis for monitoring and reporting purposes.

5.6 Concessions and exemptions awarded will be reviewed and withdrawn where:

- Activity significantly changes in scope
- Risks or safeguarding concerns emerge
- Financial circumstances of the applicant materially change

- The initiative no longer aligns with council priorities or the criteria above.

APPENDIX 1

ANNEX 2

BLEANAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FEES & CHARGES CONCESSIONS AND EXEMPTION

APPLICATION FORM

Section 1 – Applicant Details		
1.	Organisation / Individual Name	
2.	Contact Name	
3.	Address	
4.	Email Address	
5.	Telephone Number	
6.	Legal Status (if Applicable) Individual / Charity / Community Group /Other	
Section 2 – Service & Charge Details		
7.	Council Service Applied to	
8.	Service Fee / Charge	£
9.	Fee Amount	£
10.	Financial Year	
Section 3 – Assessment Criteria Applicants must address all criteria below and provide supporting evidence		
A.	**Marmot Alignment** Does the Activity target social determinants (Early years, education/skills, employment, income, healthy environments, prevention)	
B.	**Community Deal Alignment** Co-production, volunteering, community leadership	

C.	**Inclusion & Reach** Access for low income / priority groups; barriers removed	
D.	**Outcomes & Prevention** Clear outputs / outcomes; evidenced prevention; reduction in demand on services	
E.	**Financial Need** Ability to pay; reserves; match funding	
F.	**Deliverability & Safeguarding** Governance, risk, safeguarding, insurance, capacity	

Section 4 – Declaration
I confirm the information provided is accurate and I understand exemptions are discretionary. Signature: Date:

Section 5 – Council Use Only	
Assessment outcome:	
Score:	
Assessor:	
Approval:	