

# LICENSING COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Animal Licensing Fee Review</b>
Meeting date	20 May 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>To consider and approve the level of fees charged by BCP Council for the animal licensing fees chargeable for licensing functions</p> <p>The proposed 2026/27 fees and charges are set at a level to ensure that the Animal Licensing and Dog Control Service operates on a full cost-recovery basis. A proposed increase in fees and charges will help to ensure full costs are recovered in the next financial year. The percentage increase on animal activities licensing fees and charges is in line with the corporate inflation percentages recommended for this year.</p> <p>This report also recommends that the authority to set and amend licensing fees in future be delegated to the Director of Housing and Public Protection, enabling more efficient and responsive fee setting in line with statutory requirements and the Council's governance arrangements.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>Members consider the proposed fees and either</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>a) Agree the proposed fees as stated and/or</b></li><li><b>b) Agree amended fees following consideration and/or</b></li><li><b>c) Maintain the current fee structure</b></li></ul> <p><b>Members are also asked to delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Public Protection to set and amend licensing fees going forward.</b></p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>The Council is required to administer and enforce the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018. Licensing fees must be set lawfully and in accordance with DEFRA guidance, ensuring they are transparent and limited to the recovery of the reasonable costs of carrying out</p>

the licensing function.

The proposed animal licensing fees have been increased in line with inflation to reflect rising costs while remaining consistent with the requirement for full cost recovery.

Approval of the proposed fees ensures that the full costs associated with animal licensing activity are recovered, including application processing, inspection (including specialist veterinary inspections where applicable), compliance monitoring and enforcement. This avoids inappropriate subsidisation of licensed activities by council taxpayers.

Delegating future animal licensing fee-setting to the Director will allow future fee setting to be reviewed and adjusted efficiently in line with recovery requirements.

It is anticipated that all changes to fees will take effect from the 1 June 2026.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Kieron Wilson – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities
Corporate Director	Laura Ambler – Corporate Director for Wellbeing
Report Authors	Louise Jones – Environmental Health Manager
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

## Background

1. The Council is the licensing authority for a range of animal-related activities under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (the 2018 Regulations) and the Dangerous Wild Animal Act 1976. This legislation requires specified activities involving animals to be licensed to safeguard animal welfare and protect the public.
2. The Animal Welfare (Primate Licences) (England) Regulations 2024 came into force in April 2026. This placed new duty on the Council to licence primates, and a new fee is included within this report.
3. The legislation places a duty on the Council to administer and enforce the animal licensing regime, including assessing applications, undertaking inspections (including veterinary inspections where required), monitoring compliance, responding to complaints, and taking enforcement action against unlicensed or non-compliant operators.
4. The legislation enables the Council to charge fees in connection with the grant, renewal or variation of licences. Fees must be set on a full cost-recovery basis and must not exceed the reasonable costs incurred in carrying out the licensing function.
5. The Council currently reviews animal licensing fees periodically to ensure they remain lawful, proportionate and aligned with the actual costs of delivering the service. In recent years, the cost of delivering animal licensing functions has increased due to inflationary pressures, including staffing costs, inspection activity and specialist veterinary input.
6. The proposed fees for the current year reflect an inflationary uplift only and are intended to maintain cost recovery in accordance with statutory requirements and DEFRA guidance, without generating surplus income.
7. At present, the fixing and approval of licensing fees is a non-executive function discharged by the Licensing Committee in accordance with the Council's Constitution and governance arrangements. This requires committee approval each time fees are reviewed or amended.
8. Given the need for licensing fees to be kept under regular review and adjusted in response to changes in operating costs, service demand or regulatory

requirements, members are asked to consider delegating authority for future fee setting to the Director of Housing and Public Protection.

9. Delegation would provide greater flexibility and efficiency, allowing fees to be reviewed and updated in a timely manner, while ensuring that all fees continue to be evidence-based, compliant with legislation and subject to appropriate financial and governance controls.

## **Fees**

10. Animal licensing fees are calculated on a full cost recovery basis, ensuring they reflect only the reasonable costs incurred by the Council in administering, inspecting and enforcing the licensing regime and do not generate a surplus.
11. The fee calculation takes account of both direct and indirect costs, including application processing, inspections, compliance monitoring and enforcement activity over the life of a licence.
12. Where required, the costs of specialist veterinary inspections are included, along with an appropriate share of support and overhead costs necessary to deliver the service effectively.
13. The proposed fees have been updated in line with inflation to reflect increased operating costs and will continue to be kept under review to ensure transparency, proportionality and compliance with statutory and DEFRA guidance.
14. Where specialist veterinary or expert inspection is required as part of an animal licensing application, the cost of that inspection is charged in addition to the council's licence fee. Veterinary fees are payable by the applicant and reflect the actual costs incurred where specialist assessment is necessary to evaluate animal welfare, accommodation, or risk. Additional veterinary costs may apply if further inspections are required.

## **Options Appraisal**

15. Members are asked to consider the fees as proposed and
  - a) Agree the proposed fees; and/or
  - b) Agree amended fees following consideration; and/or
  - c) Maintain the current fees.
16. Members are also asked to delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Public Protection to set and amend licensing fees going forward.

## **Summary of financial implications**

17. The approved Medium-Term Financial Plan strategy for the council supports a full cost recovery approach in fee setting. The fees must cover the cost of delivery of the service.
18. The finance officer has reviewed the proposed fees and confirmed that they reflect a cost recovery position.
19. The fee calculation for staff salaries includes an estimate for the pay award in 2026/27.

20. If the fees are not sufficient to cover the costs associated with the delivery of the service, there is a risk that staff costs may need to be reduced to reflect any income shortfall.

### **Summary of legal implications**

21. The fees are required to meet the costs of the services and must be set in accordance with the legislation on a cost recovery basis. If the fees are set incorrectly this can result in judicial review

### **Summary of human resources implications**

22. The delivery of the service will remain within existing staffing levels.

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

23. There are no sustainability Impacts

### **Summary of public health implications**

24. Failing to increase animal licensing fees can have public health implications, as fees that do not reflect the true cost of regulation may reduce the council's capacity to carry out timely inspections, and take effective enforcement action. This can increase the risk of undetected poor welfare, inadequate hygiene, and insufficient disease control, raising the likelihood of zoonotic disease transmission and public safety incidents.

### **Summary of equality implications**

25. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) screening document has been completed and submitted to the Equalities team for approval. No outcome of this has yet been received.

### **Summary of risk assessment**

26. If the fees are set incorrectly this can result in judicial review
27. The fees as proposed have been carefully considered and calculated based on officer time for each licensable activity
28. If the fees are not increased both animal welfare and public health risks can be increased.

### **Background papers**

[The Animal Welfare \(Licensing of Activities Involving Animals\) \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

[Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976](#)

[The Animal Welfare \(Primate Licences\) \(England\) Regulations 2023](#)

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Comparison of current fees 2025/2026 against proposed fees 2026/2027