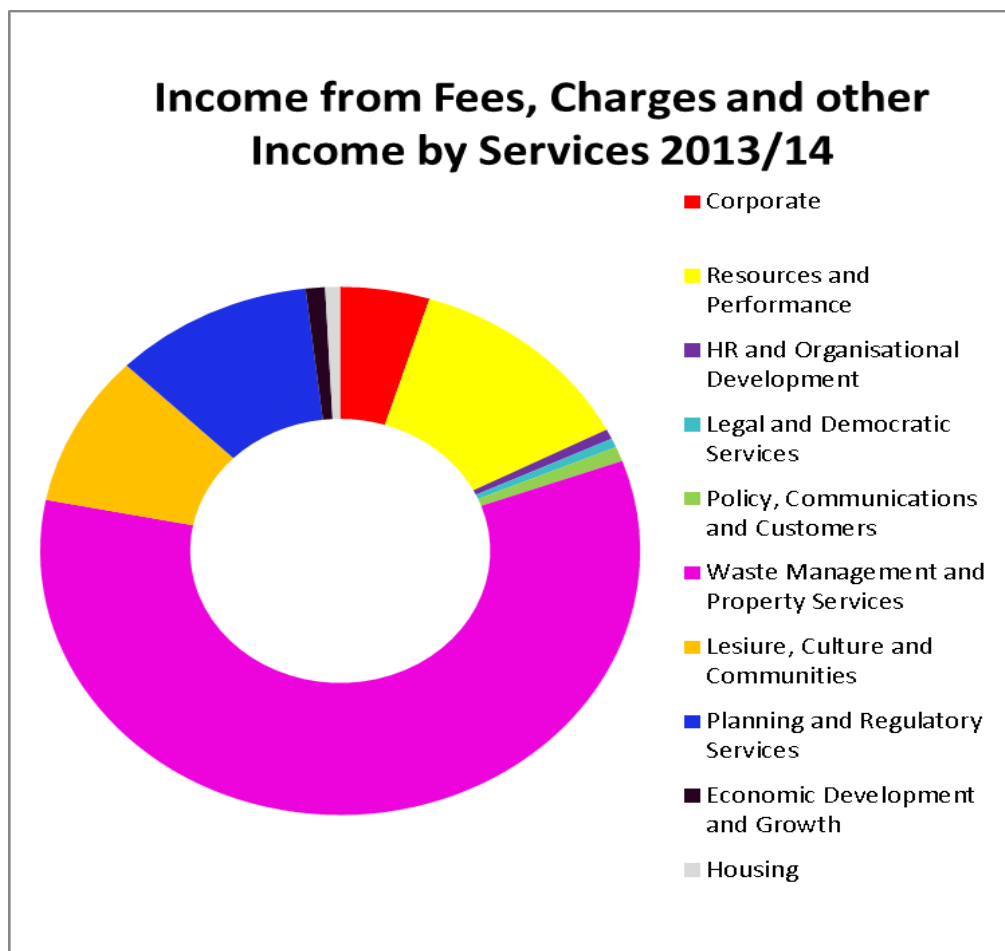


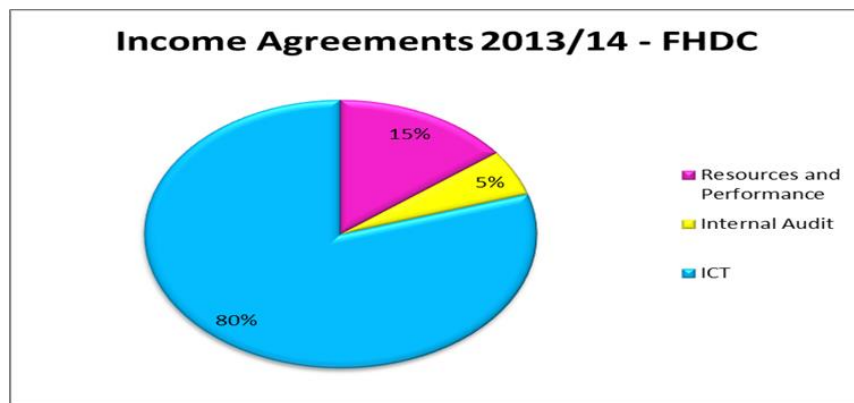
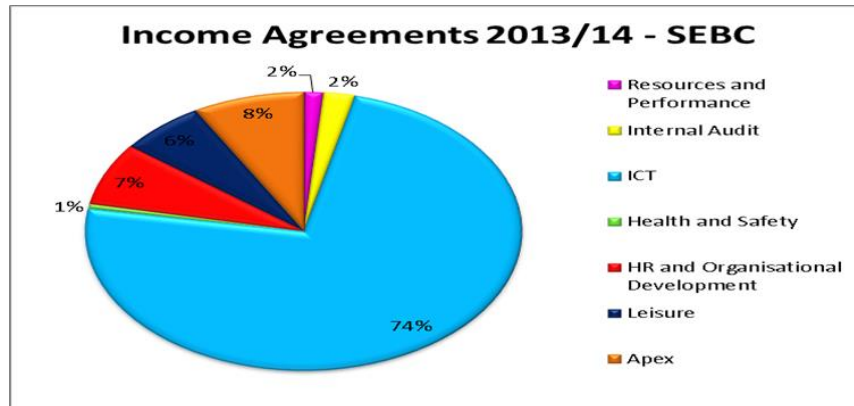
Fees and Charges Review – Summary of outcomes

1. Background

- 1.1 Both councils provide a wide range of services, often for a fee or charge.
- 1.2 The nature of these fees and charges generally depends on whether they relate to statutory or discretionary services. Statutory fees and charges are set by government with the councils having no control or very little (i.e. within a range) over pricing, whilst discretionary services are defined as those that a council is authorised but not required to provide.
- 1.3 In 2013/14 the total income from fees, charges and other income by services totalled £17.2 million (FHDC £4.3 million / SEBC £12.9 million).



- 1.4 Both councils also generate income through providing services to a range of partners, in 2013/14 this totalled £0.6 million across West Suffolk:



2. How the fees and charges review was approached

- 2.1 **Research** – other local authority policies and practices were reviewed;
- 2.2 **Benchmarking** – for a sample of fees we benchmarked ourselves against our nearest neighbours highlighting opportunities which could contribute to the cost of service delivery.
- 2.3 **Good Practice** – identified good practice in place at other local authorities;
- 2.4 **Enquiries** – met with service areas to gain an understanding as to their approach in respect of setting fees & charges and to determine where improvements could be made; and
- 2.5 **Policy Team** – met and discussed the findings / actions from the informal Behaving More Commercially Task & Finish group.

3. Key findings

- 3.1 **Approval process** – it would be useful if the approval process across both councils were aligned and consistent with one another;
- 3.2 **Process and structure** – in order to improve upon existing processes a West Suffolk Fees and Charges Policy should be drafted, supported by supplementary guidance assisting services with the methodology to set fees and charges and to record the decision making process;
- 3.3 **Training and understanding** - services have / are recognising the need for both councils to behave more commercial and would welcome advice and support to understand more about contributing to the cost of service delivery and being more business-like;
- 3.4 **Finance Business Advisors** – opportunities exist for advisors to assist services in calculating the degree to which costs are covered; exploring differing pricing modules when services are bidding for work; calculating service level agreements; and understanding the true cost of a service.
- 3.5 **Variations across service areas** – a number of variations were highlighted which should be addressed through the new policy along with the assistance and support provided by the Finance Business Advisor;
- 3.6 **Service level agreements inconsistencies** – inconsistencies exist across services but will be addressed through a new standard template, with the guidance required for staff being realised through training and support; and
- 3.7 **Technology** – services need to make access easier for residents who are increasingly seeking information or wish to make payments online. Technological improvements and the redesigned website will improve and support services in connecting more with the community they serve online.