

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET		
SUBJECT:	ANNUAL REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO		
DATE OF DECISION:	15 MARCH 2010		
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT		
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Not applicable

SUMMARY

This report outlines the reviews of fees and charges by Service Managers within the Environment and Transport portfolio and recommends increases at and above the 1.7% level of inflation.

Charges for Development Control, which are set by central government, are not included, neither are charges set by officers under delegated powers e.g. Trade and bulky refuse collection services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the charges detailed in the appendix be approved from 1st April 2010.
- (ii) To authorise the Solicitor to the Council to take any steps necessary to implement the proposals in this report, including the issue of Statutory Notices where appropriate.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The fees and charges applicable to services provided by the portfolio are reviewed on an annual basis, in accordance with the council's financial procedures. This report sets out the proposed increase in charges for 2010/11.

CONSULTATION

2. Service Managers will have been mindful of such issues as public feedback in current levels of charges and customer response in formulating proposals contained within this report. The report has also been consulted upon with internal consultees.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

3. A range of options were considered as part of the review in each applicable service area. The level of charges recommended are those believed to be appropriate to the aims and objectives of the service areas concerned.

DETAIL

4. The majority of charges are increased by 1.7% and the full schedule is provided in Appendix 1. Where there are new charges being introduced or above inflation increases further details have been set out below.

Scaffold, Hoarding Placed on or Over The Public Highway

5. The council must manage Scaffold and Hoarding applications in a consistent and effective manner from the application stage through to the removal of the activity. A new procedure will be introduced which will focus upon:-
 - The creation of an approved list of companies who have met or have agreed to meet the conditions set by the Council.
 - Checks that liability insurance is in place
 - Checking the suitability of the location for the proposed activity
 - Ensuring that pedestrian and traffic management have been considered.
 - Assessing the existing condition of the public highway and any other council asset being assessed before the activity commences.
 - Adequate coordination of these works on the highway.
 - Securing deposits to cover any potential damage to the public highway or any other council asset.
 - Regular inspection throughout the period of the activity.
 - Inspection on completion of the activity to ensure that the condition of the public highway or any other council asset has not been damaged during the undertaking of the activity.

The charges set out in Appendix 1 reflect fees reasonable costs incurred by the council in the delivery of these new arrangements.

New Roads and Street Works Act Sections 171 and 50

6. Currently permits are issued for the excavation and placing of apparatus in the public highway and it is proposed to introduce the number of inspections from three to four to enable the works to be inspected prior to works commencement to allow for adequate consideration of all pedestrian and traffic matters. In addition the level of the deposit is to be increased to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to cover any unresolved remedial matters. Appendix 1 provides full details of the new charges.

Historic Environment Record

7. The Historic Environment Record (HER) has been a free-to-access database since it's inception in the late 1980's. It is common practice in other councils to levy a charge for access to similar databases, which are increasingly referred to by planning consultants and other professionals to support planning applications. Introduction of the proposed charges will bring the council into line with other local authorities, and will generate a modest income that can be re-invested in the service.
8. The City remains one of the few local authorities not to charge commercial organisations for access to data from the Historic Environment Record. At present there are around 20 inquiries per year from commercial organisations.

HER enquiries can take between one hour and two days to complete, and on average the HER Officer spends 80 hours per year dealing with such enquiries. It is clear from comments received from customers that they usually expect to be charged for the local authorities' time in dealing with commercial enquiries.

9. Charges imposed by other councils range from £25/hour to £120/hour. Many councils impose an additional charge for priority searches, which are generally double the charge imposed for ordinary searches.
10. It is proposed that a standard charge is imposed for commercial enquiries of £60/hour from April 1st, and that a charge of £120/hour is imposed for priority searches (where information is required within two days receipt of request).
11. It is therefore anticipated that the imposition of these charges will generate £4,800 in additional income (based on 80 hours x £60).
12. Non-commercial enquiries will not be subject to these charges.

Burial Fees

13. It is proposed that fees for interment of a coffin or ashes in the cemeteries is increased by 24% to £500 and for the purchase of a grave space be increased by 15,5% to £1200. The upkeep of the cemeteries is at a significant net cost to the council and these increases will contribute to reducing this deficit.

Cremation Fees

14. The cremation fees will be increased by 8.3% which will offset in part the costs of making further improvements to the crematorium.

Port Health & Trading Standards

15. Additional charges have been introduced in line with new statutory duties imposed by the EU to control the import of high risk food and feed products. A charge has also been introduced for the verification of new EU Catch Certificates under the Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Regulations. Both charges have been set to recover costs as required by the regulations.

Registration Services

16. It is proposed that the fee charged for the licensing of a venue as an Approved Premise for a civil ceremony be increased by 18.50% to £750 to allow for an additional cost in providing this service due to new costs imposed on the licensing procedure by the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service.
17. It is proposed to charge an Express Fee of £5 for certificates requested for issue the next working day. Standard issue of certificates would normally be within 5 working days. These fees will be in addition to the statutory fees.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital

18. None

Revenue

19. The proposed increases in charges outlined in Appendix 1 have been reflected within the revenue estimates for the portfolio. Where applicable, VAT has been included within the fees and charges.
20. The majority of charges are increased by 1.7%, however, some areas of exception are highlighted in the detail of this report. There are expected to be significant increases in annual income for the highlighted services as follows:
- Scaffolding and Hoarding placed on or over on the Highway £50,000
 - New Roads and Street Works £8,000
 - Historic Environment Record £4,800
 - Burial and Cremation Fees £150,000
 - Port Health and Trading Standards £20,000
21. In the majority of these cases the increase in income will cover the cost of changes to the service whilst the income from the burial and cremation fee increases have been built into the approved budget .

Property

22. None

Other

22. None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

23. The Council has power to charge for the provision of a variety of services. The powers to charge are set out in the Statutory Framework for each service area. Where statutory framework places limits on the ability to charge this has been reflected within the proposals set out in this report.

Other Legal Implications:

24. The setting of these fees and charges is considered to be necessary and proportionate with and no negative impacts having been identified in terms of the community or special needs group. In general when residents are in receipt of benefits these charges do not apply.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

25. The proposals contained within this report are in accordance with the Council's budget strategy.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms' and can be accessed on-line

1.	Environment & Transport portfolio scale of fees and charges
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Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Background Documents

Title of Background Paper(s)

Relevant Paragraph of the
Access to Information
Procedure Rules / Schedule
12A allowing document to be
Exempt/Confidential (if
applicable)

1.	None	
2.		

Background documents available for inspection at:

KEY DECISION? No

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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