

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

14 MARCH 2013

SUBJECT	FEES AND CHARGES
WARD/S AFFECTED	ALL
REPORT OF	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER	COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES
KEY DECISION	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 In accordance with best practice, fees and charges of the authority should be reviewed on a regular basis. Whilst this is undertaken by departments it is also good practice for the Council to have a comprehensive list of fees and charges and this report seeks to meet that objective.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

BACKGROUND

2.1 The development and implementation of a Corporate Charging Policy should be a key strand of the Council's Annual Budget Strategy. During this time of austerity and rigid financial constraint it is important that the Council:-

- Ensures that current charges are set and uplifted correctly.
- Ensures collection of fees and charges operates in an effective and efficient manner.
- Takes an active approach in identifying and implementing new charging opportunities.
- Ensures the approach to charging best helps the achievement of the Council's overall strategic goals.

2.2 The Appendix contains a comprehensive fees and charges schedule for the authority. This contains a description of charge, VAT treatment, the charges for 2011/12, 2012/13 and proposed for 2013/14.

INCOME INFLATION

2.3 For 2013/14, no target inflationary increase was announced. This reflected the difficulties the Council has faced in achieving previous years income budgets. There have been a number of income budgets which have under achieved their targets. These have included car parking, cultural services fees and building control and planning fees.

- 2.4 The revenue budget 2013/14 corrected £4.5m of income targets contained in the 2012/13 budget that had not been met in previous financial years. For 2013/14 financial year directorates have examined their fees and charges and set them according to the services individual circumstances. In some cases fees and charges are not proposed to change from the level for 2012/13.

TRADING SERVICES

- 2.5 One example under this heading is Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences. These charges have been kept at the same level as 2010/11 because those applied are ring-fenced and used to pay for the service. As the current fees and charges are sufficient to pay for the service they cannot be increased as this would mean the Council making a profit in this area which is prohibited.

DISCRETIONARY CHARGES

- 2.6 The largest area is that encompassing leisure and cultural service activities. The annual review of leisure services fees and charges, especially those where there is competition from a private provider, has taken place.
- 2.7 Car parking is another significant source of income. Parking fees continue to be regularly reviewed having regard to competing providers as well as highways and traffic management issues. Following consideration of the budget options fees were revised for 2013/14. This involves standardising car parking charges across Wirral, which results in increasing the charges in west Wirral, reducing all day charges to £2.50 and the introduction of annual and seasonal permits in outer Birkenhead car parks. This option would also result in a reduction in maintenance and collection costs across the service.
- 2.8 Building Regulation Charges are complex and complicated issue. The Council is required by statute to recover the costs of the charge earning element of work over a rolling three year accounting period. Fees are set to recover costs provided that they are set within 'a scheme'. Guidance issued to authorities to aid the establishment of the appropriate charges dictates that the method of establishing the hourly rate must be indicated and a potential applicant must be advised of the charge together with the level of service he will receive upon application. Given the complexity of the charging regime and the wide range of different scenarios the building control charges have been appended to this report in three separate schedules.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 A further review of fees and charges will be undertaken during 2013 by Departments. For the 2013/14 budget setting process any increases have been applied to the relevant income budgets. Any increases can be amended by Cabinet to reflect particular market conditions and to take account of feedback from consultation.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 No specific consultation was undertaken in respect of this report.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

5.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report for voluntary, community and faith groups.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

6.1 Fees and Charges have increased on average by 1% on 2012/13, excluding any new charges that are being introduced. Any changes in income targets as a result of new charges are reflected in the 2013/14 budget.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Increases in fees and charges may impact upon certain groups such as those on lower incomes. Policies to offer discounts or apply means tests may help to mitigate these impacts. The implications of specific charges will be addressed by the relevant Chief Officer when implementing any changes.

9.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 That the report be noted and the fees and charges be approved.

12.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The bringing together of council fees and charges to be approved by Cabinet will assist in enabling the Council's fees and charges policy to follow best practice. It will also avoid the need to take multiple reports through Cabinet seeking approval for individual fees.

12.2 Under the financial regulations contained within the Council Constitution

Chief Officers are responsible for establishing a charging policy for the supply of goods and services, and, in consultation with the Director of Finance, for reviewing annually the levels of fees and charges relating to services under their control.

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APPENDIX

Wirral Council – Fees and Charges Directory
Guidance Notes on Building Regulation Charges Schedule 1
Guidance Notes on Building Regulation Charges Schedule 2
Guidance Notes on Building Regulation Charges Schedule 3

SUBJECT HISTORY

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – Fees And Charges Directory Note : Cabinet have also considered proposals for fees and charges as part of the preparation of the revenue estimates for 2013/14-2015/16.	12 January 2012