

Environment Fees and Charges Proposals – 2016/17

1. Introduction

1.1 The starting point for the base budget for the 2016/17 budget build is that fees and charges would only be increased in exceptional circumstances accepting that:

- Fees and charges can have a direct impact on usage and take up;
- In some circumstances the Council is providing services in direct competition to the private sector. Where this is the case, price is likely to have a direct link with demand and it is important that the Council does not price itself out of the market. In some areas benchmarking has taken place to ensure West Berkshire can compete with other authorities.
- Raising fees and charges can in some instances work against the Council's social inclusion agenda by effectively discriminating against those who are less able to pay;
- For some services there is a clear expectation that fees and charges will reflect the costs incurred in providing the service; the Council may be subject to legal challenge if increases in fees and charges cannot be justified.

1.2 Within the Environment Directorate fees and charges deliver an annual income of approximately £7,248,160 (2015/16 original budget).

2. Specific Proposals

2.1 Planning and Countryside

2.1.1 The original budget for 2015/16 income from fees and charges in Planning and Countryside was £1,786,200.

The main income from fees and charges is generated from the following areas:

2.1.2 Hire of sports facilities at Henwick Worthy, Holy Brook, Northcroft, Moorside and The Diamond at Greenham.

2.1.3 Development Control

Fees for planning applications are set centrally by the DCLG.

New charges are proposed for 2016/17 as follows:

£25 to solicitors who request information relating to tree preservation orders when preparing conveyance documentation; £200 for statutory declarations relating to Public Rights of Way.

2.2 Highways and Transport

2.2.1 The original budget for income from fees and charges for the Highways and Transport service in 2015/16 was £3,949,850. Fees and charges have been reviewed in order to generate additional income wherever possible. Fees and charges are generated from the following four areas:

2.2.2 Car Park Charges

Car Parking charges in Newbury were increased in 2012 and have remained static since. In 2016 several changes to tariffs have been proposed, which are included in the Fees and Charges table Appendix H iii)

2.2.3 Licence Fees, Permits and Other Charges

Fees are charged for a range of services e.g. where Highway Authority approval is required to place items or to work on the public highway. These include vehicular crossings, skips, scaffolds, table and chairs on the highway, issuing permits for and inspecting utility operations, temporary or permanent traffic regulation orders.

2.2.4 Highways Development Control Fees

Fees are charged to developers for design checking, supervision and inspection of new roads under construction and off site highway improvements.

2.2.5 Charges to Householders for Sewage Treatment

Approximately 150 properties, mainly in rural areas, are connected to small sewage treatment plants. These are the responsibility of West Berkshire Council to maintain, having previously been the ownership of Newbury District Council from when the housing stock was transferred to Sovereign Housing Association. The householders pay a fee to the Council which contributes to the maintenance costs.

2.3 Culture and Public Protection

2.3.1 The original budget for 2015/16 for income from fees and charges for Culture and Public Protection was £1,512,110. Income is generated from the following areas:

2.3.2 Trading Standards

Fees for this service include weights and measures, registration of poisons and licences for petroleum.

2.3.3 Building Control

Legislation requires Building Control charges to be set at a level to recover costs over a three year rolling period and that the service should not be profit making.

2.3.3 Waste Service

Fees include bulky household collection, provision of additional wheelie bins for garden waste collection.

2.3.4 Licensing and Environmental Health

Fees include taxi licensing, temporary events, premises, food safety etc.

2.3.5 Culture

Fees and charges fall into four main areas: Leisure, Shaw House hire fees, heritage and tourism services and libraries.

Leisure – The leisure centres are managed by Parkwood Leisure. The actual level of charge is set in accordance with Parkwood's own marketing policies, taking account of the Council's objectives for the residents' leisure card. The Council agrees the maximum fee that can be charged for admission. Increases in Parkwood's prices are agreed in December for January implementation and they have no impact on the Council's budget.

Shaw House - is an historic venue for commercial hire. The highest priority is to develop a sustainable income stream by marketing Shaw House to the business, public and community sectors as a venue for hire for meetings, conferences, training, civic occasions, celebrations and other events and activities. To this end there is no proposal to increase hire charges in 2016/17. In 2015/16 it was agreed to suspend heritage visitor entry fees to Shaw House to encourage an increase in visitor numbers, discretionary spend and promotion of the venue.

Heritage – The West Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) is a public record used by many enquirers for a variety of purposes: decision-making, planning, conservation, research, education and personal interest. Information is currently provided to all by the HER officer, and a charge is made for commercial enquiries to cover the costs of staff time; there is no

charge for the data itself. There is no charge for reasonable enquiries from the public.

The Tourist Information Centre (TIC) makes accommodation bookings in person or over the telephone on behalf of the customer. The charge, of 10% of the total stay is in line with many other TICs.

Libraries – Charges are made for the hire of DVDs, games CDs etc together with reference and research enquiries, vocal scores, book group and request services .