

Environment Fees and Charges Proposals – 2017-18

1. Introduction

1.1 The starting point for the base budget for the 2017-18 budget build is that fees and charges would be increased in order to maximise income 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 £7,869k (2016-17 original budget).

2. Specific Proposals

2.1 Planning and Countryside

2.1.1 The original budget for 2016-17 income from fees and charges in Planning and Countryside was £1,367k

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. It is proposed to increase the charges for use of our sports facilities by 1.9% in 2017-18.

2.1.3 Development Control

Fees for planning applications are set centrally by the DCLG.

2.2 Highways and Transport

2.2.1 The original budget for income from fees and charges for the Highways and Transport service in 2016-17 was £4,494k. 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

There were several changes to Car Parking tariffs in 2016. Further changes have been proposed for 2017 and these are included in the Fees and Charges table Appendix H(3).

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 2016-17 for income from fees and charges for Culture and Public Protection was £1,992k. Income is generated from the following areas:

2.3.2 Trading Standards

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

2.3.3 Waste Service

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

The Waste Service is proposing increasing its current charges in line with inflation. There is a further proposal to introduce new charges for certain non household waste items which are taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centre these include a cost for soil and rubble, plasterboard and tyres.

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 2017-18.

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.

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.