

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel Tuesday, 8th November, 2005

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Room: Committee Room 1

Time: 7.00 pm

Committee Secretary: S G Hill - Senior Democratic Services Officer
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9.a Fees and Charges (Pages 3 - 10)

The agenda for the Panel meeting referred to a fees and charges report. Two reports are attached, one dealing with the Council's overall position and the other with matters relating to Portfolios of Environmental Protection, Community Wellbeing and Civic Engineering.

Please would members bring these with them to the meeting on 8 November 2005.

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Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference:

Date of meeting: 8 November 2005

Portfolio: Finance and Performance Management

Subject: Fees and Charges 2006/07

Officer contact for further information: Peter Maddock – Principal Accountant
(Ext 4602)

Committee Secretary: S G Hill Ext 4249

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the panel consider any views on the policy for increasing fees and charges for 2006/07.

Report:

Introduction

1. As part of the budget setting process the level of fees and charges are considered for the forthcoming financial year. The general premise is that fees and charges will be increased by 2.5% in line with the consumer prices index. However where it can be justified a higher increase should be considered. This report is intended to give members an opportunity to comment on those fees and charges proposed for 2006/07.

Leisure Services

2. The general uplift for fees and charges is specified within the leisure contract, however if there is any exceptional changes to specific charges, these cannot be varied without recourse to the council.

Civil Engineering and Maintenance

3. Car parking fees form the major income source of this portfolio. It is intended that total income will be increased by 2.5%. A report elsewhere on the agenda considers the strategy to be followed and includes a tariff restructure.

Finance and Performance Management

4. There are no fees subject to the annual uplift as income of this portfolio relates to Government Subsidies and Industrial Estate rents.

Corporate Support Services

5. The main source of income to this Portfolio is for Land Charge searches. In recent years the number of private searches carried out has increased dramatically and the level of charge for these is strictly controlled by legislation. It is likely that any increase in the full search fee, over which the council does have discretion, will drive even more people to carry out private searches and the extra income from raising the fee would be lost due to a further fall in the number of full searches carried out.

Planning and Economic Development

6. The two main income areas within this portfolio are Development Control and Building Control fees.
7. Development Control fee levels are controlled by Central Government and given that an increase occurred from 1 April 2005, it is assumed that no increase will be allowed for 2006/07.
8. Building Control Fees are income to the ring-fenced Building Control Charging Account and therefore do not affect the General Fund. The rules governing this are that the council should not intentionally seek to make a surplus over any ongoing three year period and the fee structure should be based on full recovery of costs. It is unlikely that a fee increase could be justified particularly given the problems with recruitment that has occurred.

People First

9. There is little direct income here and nothing that falls within the scope of this review.

Environmental Protection

10. Fees and charges within this portfolio are to be increased by 2.5%. The main areas affected are Pest Control and Animal Welfare. Full details are contained in the more detailed report elsewhere on the agenda.

Community Wellbeing

11. The income here relates to Licences. The 2003 Licensing act transferred responsibilities to Local Councils for the administering and granting of Public Entertainment licenses. The fee structure is governed by statute and there is therefore no discretion on fee levels. Other licenses, which the council can set, are to be increased by 2.5%. Full details are also contained in the separate report.

Housing

12. The Housing Portfolio has a number of fees and charges most of which are income to the Housing Revenue Account. A separate report elsewhere on the agenda deals with this in more detail.

Conclusion

13. The proposed policy for increasing fees and charges for 2006/07 are presented for comment but generally are based on an increase of 2.5%.

**Report to Finance and Performance
Management Overview & Scrutiny
Standing Panel
Date of meeting: 8 November 2005**



Portfolio: Environmental Protection
Civil Engineering & Maintenance
Community Well Being

Subject: Fees and Charges

Officer contact for further information: J Gilbert

Committee Secretary: S G Hill (ext 4249)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To note the strategies for the Environmental Protection, Civil Engineering and Community Well Being Portfolios and recommend to the Cabinet the fees, charges and tariffs set out in the appendices to the report.

Environmental Protection

1. The EP Portfolio covers a range of fees and charges including pest control. With the exception of stray dogs, fees are recommended to increase by 2.5% to cover inflation. The charge associated with the collection of a stray dog on the first occasion has not changed over recent years. The level of £25.00 was retained in the main to encourage dog owners to reclaim their animals if they were held by the Councils in kennels. The £25.00 no longer accurately reflects the true cost, and it is recommended that the present distinction between a dog returned to its owner on the first and subsequent occasions be ceased, and that the cost reflect those actually met by the Council, namely £66.00 for the collection etc and then £9.00 per day for retention at the kennels. The proposed fee structure is set out in appendix 1.

Civil Engineering & Maintenance

2. The only source of income to the CEM Portfolio relates to car parking. As in previous years a number of concerns have been raised regarding the tariff structure, including:

- the effects upon local shopping areas of free parking provided by major supermarkets
- the wish to see a period of free parking in the Council's car parks

In the case of Waltham Abbey the request for a free period of parking has been supported through a recently received petition.

3. When tariffs were last reviewed in December 2004, a simplified tariff structure was agreed which better reflected long and short stay usage. This resulted in the tariff for 2 hours being the same in both types of car park, after which tariffs rose significantly in short stay car parks in order to deter long stay usage. In order to assist in this process the tariffs in long stay car parks for over 2 hours were significantly reduced (£3.50 to £2.50).

4. Two car parks, Traps Hill (Loughton) and Cornmill (Waltham Abbey) operate as 'dual use', whereby short stay tariffs apply for the first two hours and then the long stay tariff for over 2 hours. This has resulted in a better use of both car parks.

5. The wish to see a period of free car parking in areas where others provide this is understood. However, there are real difficulties with taking this approach:

(a) in short stay car parks, by definition, the majority of the income is generated through the first 1 or 2 hours of parking. For example, in the case of Waltham Abbey, providing free parking for the first two hours results in the loss of around £70,000 of income per annum. Such a loss cannot easily be made up through increases in other tariffs;

(b) there are practical operational difficulties with the issue of free parking tickets. Such a system is open to a range of abuse, including multiple free stays exceeding the intended free period and ticket machines being emptied, since no money needs to be entered to obtain a ticket. To avoid these requires a very significant enforcement presence, on a virtually full time basis, which of itself adds to the costs of controlled parking. These systems do operate, but only in very controlled circumstances such as supermarket car parks.

6. In considering a tariff structure to recommend to cabinet the following assumptions have been made:

- achieve an overall inflationary increase in income of 2.5%
- recover lost revenue which has arisen at Waltham Abbey since June 2005 (opening of the Tesco supermarket)
- equalise the on and off street tariffs

If these assumptions are adhered to, it is not possible to significantly reduce tariffs in the first two hours of parking, since as set out in paragraph 5 this is where the majority of short stay income is generated. However, the concerns of local traders can be accommodated, at least in part, by reducing the cost of the first half hour parking period from £0.20p to £0.10p. This would encourage short term stays. Based upon present usage this would cost around £30,000 per annum. If Cabinet wishes to see this lost income recouped, this could best be achieved by increasing the 2 hour tariff from £1.00 to £1.20.

7. With respect to on street pay and display, the 30 minute tariff is recommended to remain at £0.10p and the 1 hour and 2 hour tariffs are brought into line with off street parking, with a £0.10p increase for 1 hour and a £0.20p increase on 2 hours.

8. The above suggestions also assume that Church Hill car park in Loughton remains closed and that Smarts Lane in Loughton does not come back into use until late in 2006/07.

9. The structure for season tickets in long stay car parks was changed last year. Season tickets in short stay were not, but this has resulted in an anomaly whereby a month season ticket is cheaper in a short stay than in a long stay car park. This is clearly contrary to the Council's adopted strategy, and it is therefore suggested that the season ticket regimes be harmonised so that the long stay methodology apply also to short stay car parks.

All recommended tariffs are set out in appendix 2.

10. As part of last year's review, Cabinet agreed to recommend additional capital expenditure to upgrade the newly transferred car park in Buckhurst Hill. Whilst that process took longer than anticipated, the transfer has now been concluded and works are planned to resurface, tidy up and re-meter the car park. However, more is needed here and at other car parks to bring them up to a modern standard with high quality lighting, CCTV and other security measures. If motorists do feel that they are personally safe and their vehicles are secure, then they will not use the car parks. It is therefore recommended that approval be sought for a further £75,000 of capital to enable a continuation of the improvement process.

Community Wellbeing

11. The Community Well being Portfolio has responsibility for entertainment, liquor and public hire vehicle licensing. Since the commencement of the new licensing regime, all fees associated with that regime are set by statute and cannot be changed by licensing authorities. However, for completeness, the fee structure is set out in appendix 3.

12. All other CWB fees and chares have been increase by 2.5% to reflect inflation, and these are also set out in appendix 3.

Reason for decision:

13. To increase fees and charges generally to reflect 2.5% inflation for the financial year 2006/07, and to deal with any anomalies in fee structures.

Options considered and rejected:

14. With the exception of car parking tariffs the options available to attain the 2.5% uplift are very limited, and those put forward are considered to be the most appropriate. With regard to car parking tariffs there are a range of charging options, but it was considered important to retain a linkage with the Council's adopted parking strategy relating to short and long term parking, and the needs of residents, visitors and commuters.

Consultation undertaken:

15. None specifically, although the concerns of the Waltham Abbey Town Council and Partnership have been taken into consideration in respect of the short stay tariffs.

Resource implications:

Budget provision:	General increase of 2.5% overall in fee income
Personnel:	Nil
Land:	Nil

Community Plan/BVPP reference:

Relevant statutory powers:

Background papers:

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:

Key Decision reference: (if required)

Appendix 1 – Environmental Protection

Licence type / training	Current first application or fee	Current renewal	Proposed first application or fee	Proposed renewal
Training				
Basic food hygiene course	£46	N/A	£47	N/A
Basic health & safety course	£39	N/A	£40	N/A
Licences				
Animal Boarding Licence	£228	£156	£234	£160
Dog Breeding Licence	£228	£156	£234	£160
Pet Animals Shop Licence	£228	£156	£234	£160
Dangerous Wild Animals Licence	£510	£339	£512	£347
Riding Establishment Licence	£500	£420	£512	£430
Stray dogs				
	£25 plus £9/day	N/A	£66 plus £9/day	N/A
Pest Control				
Rats/ Cockroaches	FOC	N/A	FOC	N/A
Mice	£26	N/A	£27	N/A
Wasps	£38	N/A	£39	N/A
Others	£26	N/A	£27	N/A
Concessions	50% OAP	N/A	50% OAP	N/A

Appendix 2 - Civil Engineering & Maintenance

Short stay car parks

	Up to 30 minutes	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Over 3 hours
Existing	£0.20	£0.60	£1.00	£2.50	£8.00
Proposed	£0.10	£0.60	£1.20	£2.50	£8.00

Long stay

	Up to 2 hours	Over 2 hours
Existing	£1.00	£2.50
Proposed	£1.20	£2.50

Combined

	Up to 30 minutes	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Over 2 hours
Existing	£0.20	£0.60	£1.00	£2.50
Proposed	£0.10	£0.60	£1.20	£2.50

On street

	Up to 30 minutes	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours
Existing	£0.10	£0.60	£1.00
Proposed	£0.10	£0.60	£1.20

Season tickets

EDR = Equivalent daily rate compared to £2.50 long stay and £8.00 short stay.

Long stay car parks

	Discount	Period cost	Cost p/a	EDR
Monthly	10%	£137.50	£550	£2.25
Quarterly	20%	£122.50	£490	£2.00
Annual	30%	£428.00	£428	£1.75

Short stay car parks

	Discount	Period cost	Cost p/a	EDR
Monthly	10%	£147.00	£1765	£7.20
Quarterly	20%	£392.50	£1570	£6.40
Annual	30%	£1370.00	£1370	£5.60

Appendix 3 – Community Well Being

Entertainment and Liquor etc (set by statute)

Premises					
Fee Band (NNDR)	A	B	C	D	E
Initial Fee	£80	£150	£250	£350	£500
Annual thereafter	£40	£125	£175	£200	£225
Personal					
All £37 renewable every 10 years					

Hackney carriage / private hire

Vehicle & Driver	Current	Proposed
Annual vehicle	£251	£257
Annual driver	£77	£79
Vehicle plate	£26	£27
Private hire operators		
	Current	Proposed
Annual licence (single vehicle)	£34	£35
Annual licence (multiple vehicles)	£128	£131