

Chief Executive's Fees & Charges Proposals – 2011/12

1. Introduction

1.1 The main report highlights the fact that in building the base budget the starting point is that fees and charges should increase by a minimum of 3%. In reality, however, officers seek to look at every opportunity to maximise income accepting that:

- Fees and charges can have a direct impact on usage and take up of services;
- 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';
- 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 open itself to legal challenge if the increases it makes cannot be justified.

1.2.1 Within the Chief Executive's Directorate the main services and functions to which fees and charges apply are detailed in the specific proposals section below.

2. Specific Proposals

Registration Services

2.1 Registration fees are largely controlled by statute. A benchmarking exercise has been undertaken of fees charged by seven neighbouring authorities. The results of this indicated that West Berkshire should increase their fees as shown in the table overleaf in order to offer best value for money.

Electoral Services

2.2 These charges are statutory, set by Government and the Council has no discretion to vary.

Land Charges

2.3 There has been increasing private sector competition in the area of Land Charges in recent years. As a result of this competition (the private sector is able to charge less for searches than the local authority) the Council has progressively lost market share and income. From 1st July 2007 a new fee structure was introduced to comply with new legislation, which requires the Council to only recover cost incurred in service delivery. For 2010/11 the fee structure has been reviewed to continue compliance with the cost recovery model. This requires an uplift of 3.2%. In addition the statutory fee for personal searches has been revoked by HM Government this will result in further increased competition from the private sector, as personal search companies will be able to offer even more competitive pricing.

Legal Fees

2.4 It is proposed to increase the Council's Legal charges for third party work to bring the charges in line with other Berkshire Authorities.

Description	Current Fee 2010/11	Proposed Fee 2011/12	Notes
Registration			
Ceremonies at approved premises (Mon-Fri)	£280	£300	All increases rounded to the nearest £5 pounds.
Ceremonies at approved premises (Sat)	£330	£350	
Ceremonies at approved premises (Sun and Bank Holidays)	£380	£400	
Approved Premises Licence (more than one room)	£1775	£1775	
Approved Premises (one room)	£1605	£1605	
Approved Premises (addition of additional room to existing licence)	£305	£305	
Celebratory Services –Baby Naming/Affirmation of vows -Shaw House			
Mon to Fri	£150	£155	
Sat	£180	£185	
Celebratory Services – Baby Naming/Affirmation of vows-At Approved Premises			
Mon to Fri	£180	£185	
Sat	£205	£210	
Sun	£260	£265	
Private Citizenship ceremony			
Mon to Fri	£100	£100	
Sat	£100	£100	
Sun	£100	£100	
Nationality Checking			
Single application	£45	£50	£20 extra fee charged for Saturday appointments
Joint application	£65	£70	As above
Minor	£17	£18	As above

Description	Current Fee 2010/11	Proposed Fee 2011/12	Notes
Elections			
All fees are statutory			No change. All fees are statutory.
Local Land Charges			
LLC1	£54	£55	
Con29 PT1	£32	£33	
Con29 PT11	£16	£17	
Additional Questions	£32	£33	
Con29 additional parcel	£22	£22	
LLC1 additional parcel	£38	£40	
Personal search	£0	£0	Statutory fee removed
Personal search additional parcel	£0	£0	Statutory fee removed
Legal			
Hourly charging costs:			
Managers	£113	£115	
Team Leader	£108	£110	
Solicitor	£105	£105	
Legal Executive / Senior Legal Assistant	£92	£95	
This covers salary, employers' costs and other support charges – rent, office space, photocopying, postage, etc.			