

Report of **Senior Finance Manager**

Report to **Director of Environment and Housing**

Date: **February 2015**

Subject: **Charges Review 2015/16**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Various	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

This report seeks the approval of the Director of Environment and Housing to the increase in miscellaneous fees and charges as detailed in the body of this report. The charges relate to services provided under the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund.

Recommendations

That the Director approves the increased fees and charges as detailed in the table at paragraph 3.2 to this report.

1. Purpose of the Report

The Council's Financial Procedures on fees and charges, require that Departments at least annually review charges made for services provided. This report seeks the approval of the Director of Environment and Housing to increase charges for 2015/16 as detailed in the table at paragraph 3.2.

2 Background Information

The Department makes charges for a number of ad-hoc services which it provides. In addition, it charges for garage site rents. This report provides brief details of those services and the charges which are made and the proposed charge for 2015/16.

2.1 Housing Management:

2.1.1 Rent References. Officers within Housing Leeds receive requests from tenants to provide references to enable them to acquire mortgages, or for the purpose of moving into a Private Rented property. The additional income generated is anticipated to be minimal.

2.1.2 Communal Entrance Keys: Charges are made for communal entrance keys which are lost or damaged. The additional income will be minimal.

2.2 Homeownership:

2.2.1 Leasehold: Responses to Letters/Questionnaires: Officers within the Homeownership Team receive requests from representatives of leaseholders e.g. solicitors for the provision of written information with regard to properties on behalf of clients selling their property, or prospective purchasers. The additional income will be minimal, the total income is around £5k per annum.

2.2.2 Right to Buy Postponement Requests. The Home Ownership Team deal with applications from persons who have acquired their home under the Right to Buy and are seeking additional borrowing against their home, or are seeking to re-mortgage their home. The lenders require that the Council postpone its discount charge against the property, in favour of the additional borrowing/re-mortgage. The requirement to postpone is statutory in most instances, although not in all. There are a number of these requests each year and undertaking the enquiries can often be a time consuming exercise. Additional income generated by this increase will be minimal, annual income is around £1k.

2.3 Environment and Housing: Recharges - Staff Time

2.31 Staff can be required to attend Court, supervise works following the issue of Statutory Notices, or provide external training. Table 1 provides details of the existing and proposed hourly charge out rates for the grade bandings currently used. It is proposed that there is no increase in the hourly rates. The existing charge covers salary and oncosts, eg office accommodation, equipment etc.

2.4 Garage Sites

2.4.1 The Environment and Housing Department has land within Housing Estates which are used as garage sites. Tenants and/or members of the public can apply to erect their own garage on the land. It is proposed that the charge increases in line with the rents an increase of 2.88%. The annual charge will be £81.90 (excl of VAT) with effect from 7th April 2015. This equates to an annual increase of £2.30, which is less than 5 pence per week . The additional income generated will be minimal.

2.4.2 It is accepted that tenants of Council garage sites are responsible for the construction of the garage and maintenance. However, the charge is substantially lower than that levied for a Council Garage which it is proposed will be £7.39 per week(£384 pa) during 2015/16, subject to Council approval.

2.5 Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms

2.5.1 A number of the Sheltered Housing schemes have communal rooms which are sometimes let to external clubs/groups for meetings. A charge can be levied against the organisation based upon an hourly rate. The increase proposed is 3% approximately, in line with the proposed rent increase.

3. Finance

3.1 The increased charges for the administration functions undertaken will be minimal, estimated at less than £1,000 per annum

3.2

Table 1					
Service Type	Unit	Charge Freq	Current Charge 2014/15 (excl Vat)	Proposed Charge 2015/16 (excl Vat)	% Increase (approx)
Housing Management					
Rent References	Administration per case		£53.50	£55.00	3%
Key Fob			£ 6.00	£ 6.20	3%
Multi Lock			£10.00	£10.30	3%
Home Ownership					
Leasehold Solicitors/ Other enquiries	- Administration per case (excl VAT)		£73.50	£75.60	3%
Home Ownership – Right to Buy enquiries, Postponements	- Administration per case (excl VAT)		£99.00	£102.00	3%
Washer Tokens	-	Each	£1.07	£1.10	3%
Dryer Tokens	-	Each	£1.07	£1.10	3%
Immigration Letters	- Administration per case (excl VAT)		£48.29	£49.70	3%
Retrospective permission	- Administration per case (excl VAT)		£43.65	£44.90	3%
Retrospective permission with surveyor	- Administration per case (excl VAT)		£48.29	£49.70	3%
Replacement Heating Cards	-	Each	£5.57	£5.70	3%
Garage Sites	- Per plot (excl VAT)	annual	£79.60	£81.90	3%
Staff Time	- Clerical/Administrative (Sc1-6)	Hourly	£36.00	£36.00	
	- Supervisory (SO1- PO6)	Hourly	£64.00	£64.00	
Sheltered Housing	- Small Room	Hourly	£10.05	£10.40	3%
	- Large Room	Hourly	£15.70	£16.20	3%
	- Guest Room	Nightly	£11.20	£10.90	3%

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

There has been no consultation undertaken in respect of the increase in the miscellaneous charges. A review of the charges is required under the Councils Financial Procedure Rules. The proposed increases are between 2% and 3% approx, in line with the proposed annual rent increase of 2.88%.

4.2 Equality Diversity / Cohesion Integration

It is not considered that there are any equality; diversity; cohesion or integration issues.

The charges will be applied to all customers of the Council who receive the services detailed in this report. This is an annual review and an equality screening has been

conducted and concluded that there were no equality, diversity, cohesion or integration issues to take into account and is submitted with this report.

4.3 Council Policy and City Priorities

This contributes towards the City's policy regarding the spending of money wisely.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

The fees have been reviewed as part of the annual review process. Fees are increased to enable recovery of the cost of staff time in providing the information/service. Others fees and charges increases are inflationary increases to cover the costs of the service or equipment.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

There are no legal implications and the decision is a delegated decision under the Officer Delegated Decisions (Exec Functions) and is one which is not considered to be subject to call-in.

4.6 Risk Management

There are no risks identified.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1** The proposed increases in the fees are between 2% and 3% which is approximately in line with the proposed increase for Council rents of 2.88%.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1** The Director of Environment and Housing is requested to approve increase in fees and charges as detailed in Table 1 at paragraph 3.2 of this report. The increases to be effective from the 1st April 2015 for fees and charges and 7th April 2015 for garage sites.

7. Background Papers

None