

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
2.	Date:	12th March 2012
3.	Title:	Fees & Charges 2012/13 – Business Regulation
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report proposes the 2012/13 fees and charges for the chargeable services provided by Business Regulation.

The level of fee and charges recommended in the report reflect corporate guidance regarding any required increase, market pricing and also nationally prescribed fee levels.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member agrees to:

- the proposed fees and charges for 2012/13 scheduled within the report and that the report to be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing for approval.

7. Proposals and Details

Legislation provides powers of discretion for local authorities to make charges for specific services. This report proposes the level for the 2012/13 fees for services where charges are currently made across Housing and Neighbourhoods Services. A further report will be submitted to the Licensing Committee / Board on licensing activities falling within that Committee's terms of reference.

Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 provides powers for local authorities in England to make charges for discretionary services, providing income from the charges does not exceed the service cost.

In previous years, the vast majority of local authorities have set fees in accordance with annual guidance from LG Regulation, the remainder tend to have high local demand for specific services and offer reduced rates.

LG Regulation have been disbanded as part of the Government's deficit reduction programme. However, in the absence of any other guidance it is considered appropriate to set this year's fee levels using previous LG Regulation guidance as a baseline, with a inflationary increase across the board.

In order to ensure a consistent approach across the service, the figure that has been used is the RPI published in November 2011. This figure was 5% (rounded to the nearest percentage point).

Proposals are as follows:

Animal Health

The Council licences riding, animal boarding and breeding establishments, pet shops, dangerous wild animals and performing animals primarily to ensure animal welfare conditions are met. Regulation for some premises incorporates inspection undertaken by a veterinary surgeon, the costs of which are charged in addition to the licence fees.

Bereavement Services

Cabinet Member will be aware that the Bereavement Services Partnership commenced on 1st August 2008. The fees charged by Dignity Funerals Ltd for the bereavement services it provides are reviewed in April each year. This review is currently in progress, this involves the benchmarking of the proposed fees against those charged by comparable authorities within the region, and a comparison against the national average. A further report will follow once this exercise has been completed.

Food, Health & Safety

The Council registers premises for activities such as ear piercing, electrolysis, tattooing and acupuncture primarily to check and maintain appropriate health & safety standards.

The fees for the water samples are set to cover the fees charged by the Health Protection Agency.

Weights & Measures and prescribed poisons

Fees are charged for the testing and stamping (verification) of weights and measures used for trade and the sale by retail of certain strong chemicals prescribed by legislation as poisons.

The fee reflects the hourly cost based on the provision of a single weights and measure inspector. The hourly cost has been calculated based on average salary levels, plus all necessary on-cost for the delivery of the service. Guidance is available that sets out the methodology used to calculate the amount to be recovered. An additional fee may be charged to cover the cost of hiring specialist equipment (such as the heavy test unit).

A full schedule of the proposed 2012/13 fees and charges is attached to this report as Appendix A.

8. Finance

Proposed fees and charges for 2012/13 meet established requirements for the setting of revenue budgets.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The council may only set fees at levels that enable it to cover the costs incurred in providing the service. The new Localism Act 2011, however, will give additional scope for Councils to raise money by charging and trading in line with existing powers.

In addition, the level of fees and charges place a burden on local businesses and may, if set at unreasonably high level, impede economic growth and/or become subject to challenge. In the event that income budgets are not achieved, it will be necessary for services to make compensatory savings.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The services contribute to the Corporate Plan's objectives of;

- Helping to create safe and healthy communities, and
- Improving the environment

In particular the services helps support the protection of healthy homes and neighbourhood health and contribute in ensuring people feel safe where they live, particularly that Anti-Social behaviour and crime is reduced.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Fees & Charges 2011/12

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