

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 7 February 2019

Report of the Head of Service - Libraries, Museums, Culture and Registrars

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Libraries, Museums and Archives Fees and Charges Review 2018/19

(Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

This report presents proposals relating to fees and charges in the Libraries, Museums, Culture and Registrars Service following an annual review of charges to ensure that they support service efficiency and effectiveness, recover costs where this is appropriate and achievable, and as far as possible ensure consistency across the service.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to approve changes to library and archive fees and charges with effect from 1 April 2019 as set out below:

- (i) To increase the maximum fine limit on an individual library item from £6 to £7.
- (ii) To increase library photocopying charges for A4 black and white from 10p to 15p; for A4 colour from 25p to 50p; for A3 black and white from 10p to 25p and for A3 colour from 25p to 75p.
- (iii) To reduce the cost of borrowing DVDs from £2 to £1 for adults and to reduce the cost of children's DVD rental ('U' rated titles) from £1 to 50p.
- (iv) To introduce a reservation charge of 75p for CDs but to maintain the rental charge of 50p per week to bring into line with the reservation charge for printed books.
- (v) To introduce fines of 20p per day for the late return of spoken word items (audio books) to bring into line with fines imposed for the late return of printed books.
- (vi) To make a number of changes to hire charges and loan periods for materials borrowed from the music and drama collection as detailed in Appendix 'A'.

- (vii) To increase the cost of tokens for self-service prints from archive microfilm/fiche from 75p to 80p.
- (viii) To increase the archive record agent administrative charge from £50 per annum to £55 per annum.

Background and Advice

The recommendations listed above have been proposed following the annual review of all fees and charges across the Libraries, Museums and Archives services by a group of staff which has included senior managers, operational managers, front line and technical support staff. The service will monitor the proposed changes, should they be approved, and any findings will be considered during the annual review in 2019/20.

The reduction in DVD loan charges seeks to maximise the use of existing stock in recognition that this is fast becoming an obsolete format and that issues of this format are in sharp decline. The reductions in loan charges for orchestral sets and vocal scores have been proposed as a result of analysis of customer feedback following consultation. The revised proposals also seek to encourage greater use of these collections while ensuring, through reduced loan periods, that the most popular titles are more readily available to other users who may wish to borrow them.

Consultations

All proposed changes have been benchmarked against the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting recognised comparator group of local authorities. These are Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Cumbria, Kent, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Lincolnshire, Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk, North Yorkshire and Devon.

The recommended changes to fees and loan periods for materials in the music and drama collections have been proposed following extensive consultation with music and drama societies. The feedback from this consultation has been used to develop the revised proposals for music and drama set hire listed in Appendix 'A'.

Archive service users have been consulted about the recommended changes to the archive fees and charges.

Implications:

No significant adverse implications are anticipated from these proposals. The reduction in loan charges for DVDs and orchestral sets and vocal scores should mean that more items are borrowed from the Library service.

Financial

The projected income from the proposed changes to fees and charges set out in Appendix 'A' is an anticipated increase of c£0.050m for both library and archive

services but there is a risk that this overall target might not be achieved. Income from fines is generally reducing because of greater use of online and telephone renewals. Improvements to the county council website have made it easier for borrowers to renew online.

The income budget relating to the fees and charges detailed within this report is currently under pressure, with the current level of budgeted income not achieved. This proposed increase will assist in moving towards achieving the income target, although there is still a risk that this may not be achieved and this will need to be closely reviewed as part of the budget monitoring process.

Equality and Cohesion

Some of these proposals will be applied to people with protected characteristics and advice has been sought on the impact that these proposals might have.

The proposal to increase the daily fine rate may have an adverse impact on people with disabilities such as dementia, learning disabilities or mental health conditions who may have difficulty remembering when to return a book. There are, however, a number of ways in which customers can avoid having to pay fines as the service provides several options for renewing books including online, in person and by telephone. Library customers can also make use of the Library Elf system, a third party, free to use service, which helps members manage their loans and reservations through text and email alerts before an item is due for return. The Library Elf system will also alert customers about overdue books to minimise the risk of fines building up.

In addition to assistance with fines avoidance the library service provides mobile library services and home library services for people who are not able to visit their local library. All materials borrowed through these services have no late return charges. The library service has seen a reduction in fines income over the last year which appears to demonstrate the effectiveness of the systems which we have in place. This reduction in income is also likely to have been influenced by the increase in the daily fine rate from 15p to 20p which was implemented on 1 April 2018.

The impact of any fines for late return of spoken word hire will be mitigated as described above. The fines will not apply to people who are unable to read print including for example those who have a visual impairment, dyslexia or learning disability.

Charges for library printing and copying have not been increased for many years and still represent excellent value for money in comparison with charges made by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting recognised comparator group of local authorities.

Advice from colleagues in the equality and cohesion team has been that a full equality analysis is not required for this limited set of proposals for the library and archive services.

Given the financial position of Lancashire County Council, the limited levels of increases proposed and the fact that these increases are not necessarily regularly incurred by members of groups with protected characteristics, we believe there would be no disproportionate impact on people with protected characteristics.

Risk Management

The proposed increases have been benchmarked against charges made by Local Authorities using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting recognised comparator group and do not represent excessive increases which might provide a significant barrier to users. The proposals are based on basic principles of service efficiency and effectiveness, cost recovery and value for money.

The service will communicate with customers to explain the reasons for the changes and, in addition, will ensure that the Library Elf service is promoted to members to minimise the impact of the changes.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A