

Environment Fees and Charges Proposals – 2011/12

1. Introduction

1.1 One of the starting points for the base budget for 2010/11 is that fees and charges should increase by 3%. In reality, however, officers look for every opportunity to maximise income, accepting that:

- Fees and charges can have a direct impact on usage and take up;
- 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 be subject to legal challenge if increases in fees and charges cannot be justified.

1.2 Within the Environment Directorate fees and charges deliver an annual income of approximately £6,082,020 (2010/11 original budget). The majority of the fees and charges increases are in line with the 3% guideline in the budget strategy. The main exception is for car parks where charges were not increased for 2010 and no increase is proposed for April 2011.

2. Specific Proposals

2.1 Planning and Countryside

2.1.1 The original budget for 2010/11 income from fees and charges in Planning and Countryside was £1,878,070. Income is generated from the following areas:

- Hire of sports facilities at Henwick Worthy, Holy Brook and Northcroft
- Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre
- Development Control
- Building Control

2.1.2 Development Control

Fees for planning applications are set centrally by the DCLG.

2.1.3 Building Control

Legislation requires Building Control charges to be set at a level to recover costs over a three year rolling period and that the service should not be profit making. An overall increase of 1.5% in Building Control income has been built into the base budget for 2011/12. However, individual fees are still to be reviewed, taking into account the expected level of different types of business, with a view to ensuring that the service is self financing.

2.2 Highways and Transport

2.2.1 The original budget for income from fees and charges for the Highways and Transport service in 2010/11 was £3,060,560. Fees and charges have been reviewed in order to generate additional income wherever possible. Any surplus income will be used to contribute towards the Targeted Savings Plan in 2011/12. Fees and charges are generated from the following four areas:

2.2.2 Car Park Charges

The general tariff for car parks was not increased in 2010 and no increase in parking charges is proposed in April 2011.

2.2.3 Licence Fees and Other Charges

Fees are charged for a range of services e.g. where Highway Authority approval is required to place items or to work on the public highway. These include vehicular crossings, skips, scaffolds, table and chairs on the highway, inspecting utility operations, temporary or permanent traffic regulation orders.

New charges have been introduced for 2011/12 to cover the costs of dealing with highway boundary enquiries and tourist signs and also for recovering costs in respect of signs and traffic signals damaged in traffic accidents.

2.2.4 Highways Development Control Fees

Fees are charged to developers for design checking, supervision and inspection of new roads under construction and off site highway improvements. There was no increase in the supervision fees in 2010, but a 2% increase is proposed in 2011.

2.2.5 Charges to Householders for Sewage Treatment

Approximately 150 properties, mainly in rural areas, are connected to small sewage treatment plants. These are the responsibility of West Berkshire Council to maintain, having previously been the ownership of Newbury District Council from when the housing stock was transferred to Sovereign Housing Association. The householders pay a fee to the Council which contributes to the maintenance costs.

2.3 Property and Public Protection

2.3.1 The original budget for 2010/11 for income from fees and charges for Property and Public Protection was £1,143,390. Income is generated from the following areas:

2.3.2 Trading Standards

Fees for this service include weights and measures, registration of poisons and licences for petroleum, fireworks and motor salvage.

2.3.3 Waste Service

Fees include bulky household collection and asbestos collection

2.3.4 Licensing and Environmental Health

Includes taxis, temporary events, premises, food safety etc

2.3.5 Income from Commercial Properties

Rental income from properties owned by WBC