

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21 JULY 2009

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROTECTION

8(C) REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES IN THE LICENSING

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATION - that the Executive be informed that all fees and charges in the Licensing portfolio comply with the fees and charges strategy.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 At its meeting of the 9 September 2008, the Executive agreed to a fees and charges strategy. That strategy required that all fees and charges should be reviewed in accordance with the strategy principles. This report constitutes that review of charges in licensing.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 **Fit for purpose, services fit for you**

Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 The fees and charges strategy requires that all fees are reviewed on the basis of the following principles:

- any subsidy from the Council taxpayer to the service user should be a deliberate choice;
- fees should generate income to help deliver service improvement in priority areas;
- fees should support the medium term financial strategy;
- there should be consistency in fee setting for similar areas;
- unnecessary subsidy from the Council tax payer to commercial organisations should be avoided;

- if the impact of the review is high, then changes can be phased
- 3.2 In addition, Heads of Service were asked to identify any services where charges could be made, where they currently are not.
- 3.3 The Head of Community Safety and Licensing has ensured that where possible fees and charges are routinely benchmarked with other Local Authorities. This process takes place each year during the fees and charges setting process.
- 3.4 The benchmarking process has also provided the opportunity to compare discretionary charges made by other Authorities.
- 3.5 Licensing currently have a total of 93 fees and charges, of which 64 are statutory, and 25 have a legal requirement to be based upon cost recovery only. The 4 remaining are discretionary fees. Fees and charges are listed in spreadsheets at Appendix 'A' (Pages 8.21 - 8.26), and they are separated into "Statutory" "Cost Recovery only" and Discretion to increase" and "All charges". These spreadsheets match the Licensing fees and charges against the strategy principles and show how they comply with these principles.
- 3.8 The only fees which have scope for increase are the four discretionary charges. Three of these relate to our only sex establishment. These are already considerable. The remaining "charge" is a free of charge windscreen sticker and fare table for taxi drivers, which other authorities normally include with the licence fee.
- 4.0 Consultation
- 4.1 None
- 5.0 Legal Implications
- 5.1 None
- 6.0 Financial Implications
- 6.1 Licensing have only one non chargeable service, a window sticker and fare list, normally included in the licence fee by other local authorities. The Head of Service is consulting with the taxi driver's representatives to consider introducing a nominal charge for these items.

7.0 Human Resource Implications

7.1 None

8.0 Risk Management Implications

8.1 Increasing the discretionary fee for the single sex establishment may be challenged on the grounds of proportionality. It is already considerable, and the location of the premises is in an area where a number of other businesses have closed due to the recession.

Background Papers

None

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