

**From:** Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

**Decision:** 18/00011

**Subject:** Libraries, Registration and Archives review of fees and charges

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Future Pathway of Paper:** For Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** This report updates on the outcome of the review of Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) fees and charges. It recommends revisions to current fees and charges to be effective from 1 April 2018. It further recommends that fees and charges are reviewed and set annually in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services.

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services is asked to agree on:

- (i) the decision to implement and publish revised fees and charges changes for Libraries and Archives services;
- (ii) for the LRA service to progress to inform customers of these changes;
- (iii) fees for Archives Services to be reviewed and agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services once work on implementing upgrades to management and cataloguing systems is completed; and
- (iv) that the annual review and agreement of the LRA fees be delegated to the LRA Head of Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services as shown at Appendix A.

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Each service within Libraries Registration and Archives (LRA) has a range of fees which are either for income generation, statutory fee provision or a combination of both. Statutory fees for some Registration Services are set by the General Register Office.
- 1.2 LRA's approach, which is consistent with wider KCC transformation, is to become more commercial, which this review is part of. Over recent years, there have been some changes and increases to the services' income targets. The integration of Registration into Libraries and Archives has resulted in the service needing to restructure, transform and adapt its delivery model to suit the integrated business. In addition, wider transformation activity

across all the services means that as a result LRA has not had the opportunity for a fundamental review of its fees and charges until now.

- 1.3 The review has also highlighted that there is currently no regular review of fees and charges and this report therefore also recommends that in future, fees and charges are reviewed annually.
- 1.4 It is important to stress that this review has no impact on the range of free core services that Libraries and Archives already delivers. Our free core offer includes:
- Book loans
  - PC use
  - Wi-Fi access
  - Archive access
  - Ask a Kent Librarian service
  - Wide range of digital resources including newspapers and e-books
  - Core activities including talk time, baby rhyme time and storytime, IT support
  - Home library access/Touch a new World
- 1.5 Additionally, no new charges are proposed for services that LRA has not previously charged for.
- 1.6 Fees for the Archives Services will be reviewed once work on implementing upgrades to management and cataloguing systems, including on-line access and increased digitisation is completed.

## **2. Review approach**

- 2.1 Officers have reviewed current fees and charges to determine whether they reasonable and how they compare/ benchmark to other local authorities. The benchmarking exercise used:
- Libraries: Annual CIPFA Report on “Fines and Charges in Public Libraries in England and Wales” (2017).
  - Registration: South-Eastern Registration Board (SERB) authorities with a similar profile to Kent, namely Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, East Sussex, West Sussex.
- 2.2 As part of the review, officers have also sought to either simplify charges or improve the offer we are providing for customers. A full list of proposed fees and charges is shown at Appendix B. The following section outlines the main changes and rationale.

## **3. Proposed fees** **Libraries**

3.1 The results of the benchmarking exercise indicated that Kent was amongst the lower charging authorities on average across a wide range of fees and charges.

Authority	Overdue Book Charge	Adult Reservation Charges
Essex	10p	£1.00
<b>KENT</b>	15p	No charge
East Sussex	20p	80p
Hampshire	20p	70p
Medway	20p	No charge
Buckinghamshire	25p	60p
West Sussex	25p	90p
Oxfordshire	30p	£1.00

3.2 The service is proposing the following changes to library service fees and charges;

- Introduction of a new 3-day hire charge offer for Adult Film DVD New Releases of £2.50. The current hire charge for other Adult Film DVDs will be reduced from £2.50 to £1.50 per week. The new offer is aimed at increasing stock circulation and issues whilst generally reducing hire charges for customers. The fee for TV boxed sets will remain unchanged for a 3-week loan period. Where items are not returned by their due date, the rental charge will be reapplied, rather than a daily overdue type charge.
- Increasing the Adult daily overdue charge from 15p per item to 20p per item. The cumulative effect of this will increase the maximum 40-day charge people can incur from £6 to £8. LRA is proactive in highlighting pre-emptive actions customers can take to prevent items becoming overdue and incurring charges. This includes alerting customers by email and letter to remind them, helping them manage their accounts and ensuring they have a range of channels to renew items, in person, over the phone or online.
- Reducing the limit customers can accrue in unpaid charges on their membership before they can no longer loan books or items or use a PC from £10 to £5. This will avoid customers accruing large debts on their accounts.
- Increasing the cost of replacing Adult library tickets from 50p to £1.50
- Re-introduction of a reservation charge for adults of £0.80 for stock items from Kent's catalogue. A reservation fee was charged prior to 2013; however, it was withdrawn as part of LRAs "Get Kent Reading" initiative to encourage reading and increased-book issues. Whilst the number of reservation requests has ~~did~~ increased by 25% since 2013, the number of book issues across the county has not increased to the same extent. We are also aware that despite reminders, many reservations remain uncollected. This means items are not available to other customers and has required the unnecessary handling and transportation across the County of stock items. We estimate that with the re-introduction of this charge this could potentially reduce requests by 20%. Reservations for children and teenage members will remain free of charge

- Increasing the charges for customer requests for special loans which are non-Kent stock items to reflect the actual cost to LRA/KCC applied by other institutions. These are national charges and prior to this review have been subsidised by LRA. This is not sustainable going forward. Concessions are given to students for inter library loans where these are related to their course.
- Introduction of a sliding scale for Specialist Music and Drama Collection sets based on the number of sets borrowed. Very few authorities now offer music and drama collections. Kent still maintains a notable collection at its distribution building at Quarrywood. These collections are sets of performance music or plays for drama performances. These sets are hired by both semi professional and amateur clubs and societies and last financial year saw 1,017 loans. We currently charge a single fee regardless of the number of sets the hiring group loans, thus impacting disproportionately on the often smaller, amateur groups. Fees for external Kent groups will be charged on a cost-recovery basis. Replacement of lost and damaged items will also be charged on a cost recovery basis.
- Increasing print and copy charges for black and white printing but reducing the cost of colour printing.

## Registration

- 3.2 Since the implementation of the Marriage Act in 1994 Kent has established itself as one of the most popular destinations for Approved Premise ceremonies in England & Wales due primarily to the diversity of its venues. There are currently 230 Approved Premises and officers officiated at 3,760 ceremonies at Approved Premises in 2017.
- 3.3 The fee for the provision of Statutory Marriage and Civil Partnerships at Kent's Registration Offices is £46. However, registration authorities can apply their own scale of fees for discretionary services which include Licencing of Approved Premises, ceremonies at those venues and fees for their own authority owned premises. Variations to offers and charging models make direct comparison difficult, however, where information is available, our benchmarking exercise has indicated that for several elements Kent's fees are lower than similar authorities.

Authority	Approved Premises Licensing Fee	Weekday ceremony fee at an approved premise.
<b>KENT</b>	£1,650	£436
East Sussex	£1,836	£500
Hampshire	£2,197	£439
Buckinghamshire	£2,000	£549
West Sussex	£1,850	£414
Oxfordshire	£2,050	£520

- 3.4 The overall 'Kentish Ceremony' offer has been taken into account when considering this review of fees such as the range of our own venues, the ceremony choices offered to

couples and in relation to our Partnership with Licensed Venues and our commitment to honour charges for all current bookings.

### 3.5 The service is making the following proposed changes to Registration fees and charges

- Increasing the Approved Premise Licence Fee to £2,000 from £1,650. The fee for additional rooms/areas within the premises, including Gazebos will be £100. This allows venues the opportunity to offer wider choices for marriage services within their premises.
- Increasing ceremony fee bands at Kent's own Registration Offices. The bands relate to the size of room and standard of accommodation. The highest fee band is unchanged to encourage increased use of these rooms.

These changes ensure fees are comparable with other local authorities.

### 3.6 Changes to other registration services fees are:

- Increasing Nationality Checking Service fees from £65 to £85. Administration fees will also increase to reflect reasonable costs incurred by the service.
- In 2013, the service introduced an offer for Non-statutory ceremonies, Renewal of Vows and Welcoming/Naming Ceremonies, charged at a single rate of £249, irrespective of date or location. This purpose was to increase income, but it has not been successful. In 2016/17 there were only 6 welcoming ceremonies and we propose to cease this offer.

## 4. Financial Implications

4.1 LRA has an increased income target of £350K for 2018-2019 which will be met through the changes to fees and charges proposed in this report.

4.2 In relation to ceremony registration fees the full impact of these increases will be delivered in 2019/2020 due to the number of booking already accepted where we will honour the fees quoted at time of booking. This is likely to apply to approximately 70% of our ceremony bookings for 2018.

4.3 It is also proposed that LRA's fees and charges should be subject to a yearly review.

## 5. Equalities Implications

5.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed which is included as Appendix C.

## 6. Next Steps

6.1 Subject to the Cabinet Members decision LRA would look to progress implementation from 1 April.

## 7. Summary

7.1 LRA has completed a full review of Library and Registration fees and charges. The service needs to ensure our fees are competitive with other authorities, ensuring we maximise potential income alongside our commitment to the free core service offers.

7.2 LRA has worked to ensure that any increases are reasonable. Fees and charges will be regularly reviewed alongside working to continually improve our service offer.

## 8. Recommendation

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## 9. Appendices

- Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B: Proposed Fees and Charges 2018/19
- Appendix C: Equalities Impact Assessment

## 10. Report Authors

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