

Fees and Charges 2019-20

This report provides a summary by Service area of changes to existing Fees and Charges in 2019-20. A full list of Fees and Charges proposed for 2019-20 is detailed within Appendix D – Fees and Charges Schedule. Additionally this list can be viewed at:

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/draftbudget

The Medium Term Plan (MTP) requires the Council to review opportunities for income generation, with the details below summarising the main changes to fees and charges for 2019-20.

Wellbeing and Prevention Services

Country Parks

Pay and display machine parking charges account for 75% of total park income. There is known price sensitivity here and increasing prices above what the customers consider to be value can and has in past resulted in less income. It is particularly important not to depress the off peak demand in order to avoid negative impacts on health & wellbeing, and on the financial viability of cafe tenancies. There are also practicalities against introducing small 5p/10p etc inflationary increments as the machines do not give change. Our costs have increased; with the law changing in January 2018 making it illegal to charge more for credit card than cash sales. The per transaction cost for pay and display machines is unavoidably high compared to other means, with each transaction costing us 18p. Since the price was equalised the use of credit cards for pay and display in our parks increased from 5% to 20%. We need to pass on the additional cost to the customer to avoid losing up to £30k pa income, hence the suggested 20p increase – an amount that minimises the number of additional coins needed by cash paying customers.

It is proposed to increase season ticket parking charges by £1 per ticket to be commensurate with increase in day tickets and in a way that maintains a 'rounded sum' for ease of promotion.

The Education Ranger pricing structure has been reverted back to a previous model as this was more successful than the 2018 model. Demand is precarious here as school budgets come under pressure and transport costs increase. This area of work generates a small surplus and also encourages visits to parks by parents during out of school times and reduces vandalism in parks by teaching children to respect their parks.

Libraries

Libraries have traditionally had a high income target for many years so have sought to achieve this through fees and charges. This means that in comparison with other library authorities we already charge significantly more than the surrounding services. In 2017/18 we raised our room hire fees by 10% and this resulted in a significant reduction in use and income generated.

Having surveyed the surrounding authorities we believe that we could raise the following fees:

- Bring remaining research and local history fees in line with those charged by the Record Office
- Our printing/photocopying is comparatively high but raising A4 colour copies to 70 pence would bring us in line with other authorities
- Raising our reservation charge from £1.30 to £1.50 would bring us in line with other authorities
- The lending of Music sets service operates on a subscription level and as we haven't raised this in a couple of years we consider that an increase from £220 to £275 would be reasonable.

Registration

Increases are applied to those fees not set by statute, and are based on a variety of factors: an assessment of what the market will bear; local knowledge; reference to other authorities' fee levels, all bearing in mind the cost of delivery where appropriate to ensure value for money for the taxpayer.

The regulator has introduced some new statutory fees for existing services, including applications for customer-fault corrections to register entries and consideration of divorces granted outside the British Isles.

Charges in relation to the Nationality Checking Services have been held as it is understood that the national scheme for these service is shortly scheduled to cease.

The service is maintaining a seasonal tier to its ceremony prices at its busiest times: Fridays and Saturdays in June to September. This is to reflect its greater staff costs to maintain service delivery and to encourage customers to book their ceremonies "off-peak" to spread demand across the week and season. In 2018 the application of this additional fee enable the service to meet peak demand throughout the summer.

The Registration Service requires the flexibility provided by NCC's policy to enable decision-makers to increase, decrease or introduce new fees and charges in-year in certain circumstances and for a variety of reasons.

Outdoor Learning

Careful analysis of the Outdoor Learning market has been undertaken to determine the potential to raise charges in 2018/19. The outdoor learning market remains largely static with limited opportunity to alter prices. However, charges have been increased by an average of 5% but in such a highly competitive market with school budgets to fund residential breaks to this provision diminishing, the Outdoor Learning Service requires the flexibility provided by NCC's policy to enable decision-makers to change prices in year and to offer discounts in certain circumstances and for a variety of reasons.

Each Centre's proposed residential fees increase are specific. Longtown would see an average 2% increase, Everdon 0% and Grendon a range of increases up to 7%.

Minibus Training held at 2 of the 3 centres sees an increase of 10% to 20% depending on the nature of the training. For all other activities, such as Activity Days, D of E Training and Room Hire, the proposed fee increases are specific to the appropriate Centre. These are not comparable between Centres as each provides a unique set of services.

Knuston Hall

It is felt that the local and national marketplace for our products will withstand any increase in price in the next 18 months.

Adult Learning

There are currently no plans to increase ALS fees. ALS charges fees for the universal programme and these were raised for the summer term 2017 by 50p an hour meaning that the programme subsidised by the ESFA now costs £5.50 an hour. In the last academic year a number of full costs courses were also introduced at a cost of £8.20 an hour and as a consequence fee income for the year reduced overall due to lower take up on these courses. The service is currently undertaking a review of which courses should be subsidised, and which should go to full cost, for the next financial year, which is being influenced by emerging government policy and the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) contract and funding rules. As this service is grant funded, any surpluses are required to be reinvested into the service.

Northamptonshire Sport

Northamptonshire Sport have been unable to deliver the community swimming lessons service since July due to ongoing facility maintenance issues at the Duston School pool resulting in the temporary closure of the pool. In addition, the Duston School is in negotiation with a third party to take over the running of the pool which would result in the loss of pool time in the future. There are no other pools in the surrounding area with facilities available for us to use.

School swimming lessons to primary aged children will continue as part of the Sport England specification. There is scope for a moderate fee increase for these lessons. This provision is grant funded and therefore any surpluses are required to be reinvested into the service..

Children's Services

Educational Psychology Service

For 2019-20, the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has increased its fees by an average of just under 2%, reflecting unavoidable cost increases in service delivery. To minimise the impact of this price increase, schools are encouraged to work together to achieve the higher number of days per

Service Level Agreement. An alternative can be to create a SLA that extends over more than 1-year to change the 'banding' into which the SLA falls. Maximum length is for 3 years. Costs are fixed for the duration of the SLA. This provides protected pricing to those SLAs that extend beyond one year.

The Virtual School

The Virtual School has increased charges for training and conferences from £75 (full day 2014 price) to £90. This is still a subsidised rate and reflective of what neighbouring authorities charge. Furthermore, costs with providers have increased since 2014 and £90 reflects additional costs to hosting training and conferences.

School Effectiveness

There are no proposals to change the existing charges. A review of all charges will take place during 2018.

Provision of Appropriate Body functions

There are no proposals to change the existing charges.

Moderation

There are no proposals to change the existing charges.

Leadership and Governance

There are no proposals to change the existing charges.

Place

Highways & Transport

The County Council is responsible for the control and management of a wide range of activities that take place on the highway, and in doing so issues various licences, orders, consents and agreements to appropriate parties. The County Council also undertakes highway searches and enquiries on behalf of a number of stakeholder organisations. To ensure that there is no cost to the Council; legislation allows the authority to recover costs that are incurred in granting these permissions and in undertaking searches etc. in accordance with legislation, mainly the Local Authorities (Transport Charge) Regulations. The majority of charges are at the County Councils discretion, but some are statutory such as Blue badges where the charge is set by central government. In determining its charges the authority must take into account the reasonable costs incurred in providing these services.

A recent review during 18-19 resulted in the majority of fees and charges increasing by 3.5% (RPI). This change will be implemented during the 19-20 financial year.

Trading Standards

It is proposed that for 2019-20, fees and charges are increased by 3.5% (RPI).

Archives and Heritage

The Archives Service provides access to the unique historic records of the county. Access is free but the service seeks to make income from charging for services. There are fees for research undertaken for users if they cannot visit in person, commercial searches, and any personal consultations. The majority of income is generated from charges for copies, including digital images, permits of various sorts and publications.

It has been decided to apply the RPI of 4% across all charges for the coming year. The take up of services is declining overall, so it is important not to price the service out of the market. Increases in staff and product costs only will be covered.

This excludes the rates of royalties that the service receives for online publication of key sources, as these are set by the commercial provider.

Olympus Care Services

Adults and Wellbeing Services

The January 2018 Cabinet approved the recommendation to give delegated authority to Director of Adult Social Care Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care to take the appropriate actions to bring Olympus Care Services back into the Council under this new directorate and close the Local Authority Trading Company (LACT).

The fees and charges shown within the schedule provide the details of the current expected pricing structure for 2019-20. Olympus provides a range of social care and community services for both NCC funded social care clients and self-funded clients. The price lists reflects the rates charged to self funded clients going forward.