

## **Fees and Charges 2018-19**

This report provides a summary by Service of changes to existing Fees and Charges in 2018-19 . A full list of Fees and Charges proposed for 18-19 is detailed within Appendix E. Additionally this list can be viewed at:

[www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/draftbudget](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/draftbudget)

There is a budget proposal (15-004-19 c/d: Fees and Charges) which requires the Council to review opportunities for income generation as part of medium term plan with the details below summarising the main changes to fees and charges for 2018-19.

## **Wellbeing and Prevention Services**

### **Country Parks**

Pay and display machine parking charges for both peak and off peak were brought into line at £3 per day during 2016-17. The £3 fee is easy for customers. It is recommended that this basic fee is maintained as it is particularly important not to depress the off peak demand in particular, 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. It is proposed; however to introduce a new higher charge for visitors who stay more than 4 hours: Unlike a short stay, a long stay option is enforceable and from customer surveys around 10% of our visitors state a length of stay of more than 4 hours. The proposal is to increase this charge from £3 to £5.

It is proposed to increase season ticket parking charges by £1 per ticket to account for around two year's rolled up inflation in a way that maintains a 'rounded sum' for ease of promotion.

Education Ranger charges have been amended with some charges being removed and others newly introduced where appropriate.

### **Libraries**

For 2018-19 it is proposed to hold all fees and charges this year given that the majority of fees are already comparatively very high to both market prices and benchmarks with other library services. Additionally income from all income streams is decreasing as volume has decreased in line with previous fee increases. For example, room hire was raised by 10% in 2017/18 however such has been the subsequent decline in volume of sales that it has negated the fee increase. Any increase this year is likely to lead to an overall decrease in income due to reduced take up.

## **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.

## **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.

The service is replacing its booking and management system, which will add additional online services and allow customers to pre-pay their statutory fees at the time of booking. It will also offer an improved user experience on tablet and mobile devices.

The majority of the service's customers already benefit from many of its services being offered online. To encourage further channel shift from phone to online, the service has increased the range of its services for which there will be an additional fee to transact over the phone, when it can be completed online. The fee itself will not increase in 2018/19.

The service has created 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.

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.

### **Adult Learning**

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 was 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 academic year 2018 - 19, which is being influenced by emerging government policy and the ESFA funding rules. It is also envisaged that once TERMS has been migrated to West March and a brand new, vastly improved website is introduced that this would also be a good time to launch new courses with a new fee structure. In summary, it is not desirable to raise fees at this stage in the financial year.

### **Knuston Hall**

We propose increasing fees for both our in week and weekend courses for residents. Non-residents fees will be reduced. Day course fees are planned to be increased by 10%.

Knuston Hall has a Fees and Charges planning cycle that is structured around the academic year for its own courses and learning events. The major driver affecting decisions about increasing or decreasing these prices is the level that the marketplace can sustain as well as the costs incurred in running the events.

This market place remains a challenging business environment with little space to increase Fees and Charges. Further, it is not yet possible to predict the situation in the marketplace and within competitor venues both locally and nationwide in order to agree price increases for October 2017.

Knuston Hall 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, as defined within the existing Fees and Charges Policy.

### **Northamptonshire Sport**

It is proposed that there is an increase in fees for community swimming lessons ('Making Waves') by approximately 5%. Last year's fees were not increased, making this the first increase for two years. The proposed fees are competitive in relation to a much wider market around children's learn to swim lessons.

## **Children's Services**

### **Educational Psychology Service**

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has increased its fees by an average of just under 2%, reflecting unavoidable cost increases in service delivery. The increase has been weighted towards spot-purchasing and low numbers of days per year. 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. As before, the 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 17-18 resulted in the majority of fees and charges increasing by 4% (RPI). This change will be implemented during the 18-19 financial year.

## **Trading Standards**

It is proposed that for 2018-19, fees and charges are increased to cover the increase in staff costs and the anticipated increase in other costs of approximately 4% across the majority of Trading Standards fees & charges.

## **Fire & Rescue**

There are no proposals to increase Fire & Rescue fees & charges for 2018-19. Compared to other Fire Authorities NFRS are still comparatively more expensive on many services. A review is in progress to ensure consistency and currency of the list.

## **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.