

Fees and Charges 2017-18

Fees and Charges proposed for 2017-18 can be viewed on the County Council website here:

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/draftbudget

There is a proposal in place (15-004-19a/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 2017-18.

Wellbeing and Prevention Services

Country Parks

Parking charges for both peak and off peak were brought into line at £3 per day during 2016-17 and there are no plans to increase charges for 2017-18. Fewer people have used the parks since the off peak rate was increased with subsequent negative impacts on health & wellbeing, and on the financial viability of cafe tenancies. It is recommended that should this trend continue, or worsen, over the 16-17 winter that delegated authority be given to reduce the September to February parking fee to £2.50 in order to stimulate winter use of the parks and to support cafe businesses during the difficult winter months.

Some Education Ranger charges have been increased by 50p per hour but all other charges remain unchanged.

Libraries

For 2017-18 it is proposed to hold the majority of fees and charges again this year. There is a 10% increase in room hire rates, and we are introducing a new service (European Passport Return Service) at a charge of £15.

Outdoor Learning

The majority of prices have been retained at the 2016-17 levels to remain competitive with similar commercial provisions which are also holding their prices. Some services at Longtown have been removed and new options added.

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.

Registration

Increases are limited 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.

Approved venue licence fees were increased during 2016-17 but no further increase is proposed for 2017-18.

Smaller fees show disproportionately large increases simply because they are increased to the nearest sensible price point.

Adult Learning

The hourly full fee rate (Skills & Funding Agency funded) has been increased by 50p and the remitted rate has been increased from 25% to 30% of the full hourly rate. The service needs the opportunity to review this further, when new funding rules from the SFA will have been issued later in the year, for an August 2017 fee rate increase. The fee for dyslexia assessments for NCC staff has been increased by £50.

Knuston Hall

We propose increasing fees for our weekend courses by approximately 5%.

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.

Children's Services

Educational Psychology Service

The EPS has increased its fees by an average of just over 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.

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 amount of the charge is at the County Councils discretion, but in determining its charges the authority must take into account the costs incurred in providing these services.

A recent review during 16-17 resulted in some fees and charges increasing between 12 – 15% from a base position in 15-16. This change has been implemented during the 16-17 financial year.

It is proposed that for 2017-18, fees and charges are increased to cover the increase in costs anticipated of approximately 2.5% across most of the Highways & Transport fees & charges.

Trading Standards

It is proposed that for 2017-18, fees and charges are increased to cover the increase in staff costs and the anticipated increase in other costs of approximately 2.5% across the majority of Trading Standards fees & charges.

Fire & Rescue

There are no proposals to increase Fire & Rescue fees & charges for 2017-18. 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.