

Subject:	Life Events Fees and Charges review for Registration Services 2020/21
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2020
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy Governance & Law
Contact Officer: Name:	Paul Holloway
Email:	paul.holloway@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	(All Wards);

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for the financial year 2020/2021 for Registration Services within Life Events, in Strategy Governance & Law.(SGL)

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 Members are requested to approve changes to fees and charges in the Registration Service as shown in the appendix.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council adopted a Corporate Fees & Charges Policy in 2008. The main aims of the policy were to ensure that:

- Fees and charges are reviewed at least annually including consideration of potential new sources of income;
- Fees and charges are set after comparing with 'statistical nearest neighbours' (or other relevant comparator groups) and taking into account market, legal and other contextual information;
- Unless set by a statute, fees and charges are set to recover full costs, including central overheads and capital financing, to ensure that services maximise potential for income generation from the services offered.
- Subsidies and concessions are not applied unless approved by members;
- The impact on financial inclusion is considered when setting fee levels

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 For Registration, this year's proposals take account of knowledge of the local market in relation to current business levels, as well as projected future demand for services based on this current information. Nationally there is a drop in

demand for notices of marriage and civil partnerships. There has also been a pressure to the income levels for statutory certificates, where the government have increased certificate costs, resulting in a significant drop in the purchasing of birth and death certificates, at the time of registration. These issues have been factored into assessing potential increases in non-statutory services.

- 4.2 Despite the drops in demand for services, analysis does suggest there is an opportunity to increase certain non-statutory charges, having reviewed latest benchmarking information held for neighbouring local authority registration service providers, whilst remaining competitive. Benchmarking information has been predominantly taken from near neighbours, as customers are more likely to use their services if choosing not to use the services that our Registration services offer.
- 4.3 All non – statutory fees and charges have been reviewed, and the proposals ensure we continue to maintain cost recovery, and charge appropriate and lawful fees for non-statutory services offered, including having the ability to set fees for bespoke ceremony requests, on application. It is however, not within our power to increase / alter statutory fees, where budget pressures have arisen.
- 4.4 Consultation with the General Register Office (GRO) has previously established there is not a legal obligation to consult with members of the public about non-statutory fees, as the Local Authority should have its own policies for fee setting against services it provides. Brighton & Hove City Council adopted a Charges and Fees setting policy in 2008.
- 4.5 A further review of fees and charges may be carried out during the financial year 2020/21, as we continue to assess the changing demands of customers.
- 4.6 Where fees and charges increases are proposed, as detailed in Appendix 1, the additional income generated from non-statutory fee increases will be offset against not being able to meet the inflated income target for statutory fees. This is due to the drop in numbers of birth certificates and death certificates being purchased following the government's instructions to increase statutory fees from £4.00 to £11.00 per certificate. The proposals therefore look to ensure the Registration Service is able to generally meet income targets for 2020/21 across all statutory and non-statutory fees, should business level trends continue to drop in a consistent way, as experienced for the service in 2019/20.
- 4.7 Appendix 1 contains a table of the main changes to our fees where changes are proposed over and above the standard annual inflationary uplift.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Registration Services continues to work with customers and community groups, including multi-faith groups. Engagement with the General Register Office, alongside benchmarking information from other service providers, enables these realistic proposals to be put before members.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 A full assessment of services provided, along with unit costings for every service and product, has ensured these proposals cover costs and are set realistically, and competitively against other service providers, and have some flexibility for customers who choose the Brighton & Hove Registration service

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications: The fees and charges recommended in this report have been reviewed in line with the Corporate Fees & Charges Policy and all relevant regulations and legislation. The anticipated recurring financial impacts of fee changes will be reflected within service revenue budgets. Increases to meet the corporate rate of inflation of 2% are normally applied to all council income budgets to ensure income is maintained as a proportion of the net cost of service. Increases above or below the corporate rate of inflation require approval by the relevant service committee or Policy & Resources Committee and can result in additional contributions toward the cost of services and/or corporate and service overheads. This can also result in the achievement of a net budget saving to the council. Where this is the case, this will be reflected in 4-Year Budget Plan proposals for the relevant service and will be incorporated within the revenue budget report to Policy & Resources Committee and Budget Council in February 2020. Income from fees and charges is monitored as part of the Targeted Budget Monitoring (TBM) process

Finance Officer Consulted: James Hengeveld

Date: 06/12/19

Legal Implications:

- 7.1 The proposes changed in fees comply with legal requirements, including the need to ensure they are set based on cost recovery and having regard to national legislation.

Lawyer Consulted:

Abraham Ghebre-Ghioorgis

Date: 15/01/2020

Equalities Implications:

- 7.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has previously identified that no specific minority groups are disproportionately affected by proposals to increase certain fees.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.3 None

Any Other Significant Implications:

7.4 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Appendix 1 details fees and charges increase proposals and benchmarking information.

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Documents in Members' Rooms

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1. None

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Background Documents

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1. None.

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Crime & Disorder Implications:

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- 1.1 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 1.2 None

Public Health Implications:

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- 1.3 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

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- 1.4 None