

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham CABINET MEMBER DECISION August 2016		 hammersmith & fulham
PROPOSED REGISTRATION SERVICE FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2016/17		
Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Residents Services - Cllr Harcourt		
Open Report		
Classification - For Decision		
Key Decision: No		
Wards Affected: All		
Accountable Director: David Page, Director for Safer Neighbourhoods and Registration		
Report Author: Layla Vaughan, Registration Service Manager		Contact Details: Tel: 020 8753 2438 Email: Layla.Vaughan@lbhf.gov.uk

AUTHORISED BY:

The Cabinet Member has signed this report.

DATE: 3 August 2016.....

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report explains why the current income target for the Registration Service is not currently being achieved. Uncontrollable central government changes to the application process for Citizenship and Nationality Check and Send (NCS) services, have resulted in a sustained reduction in demand.
- 1.2. To remove this budget pressure, changes to fees and charges are proposed. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member agrees to the introduction of a new income stream and agrees the proposed uplifted fees and charges from 1 April 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. To approve the proposed Registration Service fees and charges from 1 April 2016 as set out in Appendix 1 in order to remove the existing budget pressure.

3. REASONS FOR DECISION

- 3.1. The Registration service is currently forecasting a £65k income pressure for 2015/16 (compared to a target of £533k), due to uncontrollable central government changes to the application process for Citizenship and Nationality Check and Send (NCS) services, that have resulted in a sustained reduction in demand.
- 3.2. The recommendations set out in this report are expected to close this budget gap in future years.

4. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 4.1. The Registrars Service includes the following income generating areas: Registration, Citizenship and Nationality Check and Send (NCS). Whilst these are significant income generators for the Council, actual income achieved has been less than budgeted in recent years, as set out in the table below.

Activity	2014/15			2015/16		
	Income Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Income Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Registration	302	301	(1)	313	313	0
Citizenship	135	86	(49)	135	85	(50)
NCS	85	64	(21)	85	70	(15)
Total	522	451	(71)	533	468	(65)

- 4.2. Registration income is comprised of both statutory and non-statutory income. NCS and Citizenship income are both non-statutory services.

5. PROPOSALS AND ISSUES

5.1. Citizenship income

Prior to 2014/15, Citizenship income was reasonably static at circa £120k per annum. In October 2013 the Government introduced new stringent English language requirements as part of the Citizenship application process, causing a peak in applications during 2013/14 where applicants rushed to apply before this was introduced. Those applicants would naturally have applied in later years, but they all applied before October 2013 to avoid having to go through these stringent requirements. Clear guidance has been issued by the Home Office setting out that this level of output will not be attained again. In addition more stringent requirements were put in place in December 2014, which further reduced the number of successful applicants eligible to apply for

Citizenship extending the previous five year 'clear immigration history' to 10 years.

- 5.2. The result of this has been a significant and sustained drop in income for the Council, as set out in the following table:

Citizen Income Trends

Year	Income Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
2011/12	122	104	18
2012/13	122	126	6
2013/14	122	138	16
2014/15	135	86	(49)
2015/16	135	85*	(50)

**Estimated*

- 5.3. Given the advice from the Home Office and the actual activity levels being observed, the ongoing budget pressure in this area is likely to be £50k per annum. As such, it is proposed that the income budget is permanently adjusted down and offset by an increase in the Registrar income target (see below).

Nationality Check and Send (NCS) Income

- 5.4. NCS income is dependent on the amount of customers applying for Citizenship as this is the platform by which potential Citizens submit their applications to the Home Office for approval. Naturally as the citizenship applications continue to decrease, the demand for NCS appointments decreases.
- 5.5. As for Citizenship, the result of this has been a sustained drop in income for the Council, as set out in the following table:

NCS Income Trends

Year	Income Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
2011/12	51	55	4
2012/13	51	65	14
2013/14	61	71	10
2014/15	85	64	(21)
2015/16	85	70*	(15)

**Estimated*

- 5.6. The ongoing budget pressure in this area is likely to be £15k per annum. As such, it is proposed that the income budget is permanently adjusted down and offset by an increase in the Registrar income target (see below).

Registration Income

- 5.7. Registration income is comprised of both statutory and non-statutory income. The current forecast for 2015/16 meets the budget and is £12k more than that achieved in 2014/15.

Registration Income Trends

Year	Income Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
2011/12	262	254	(8)
2012/13	258	246	(12)
2013/14	306	271	(35)
2014/15	302	301	(1)
2015/16	313	313	0

**Estimated*

5.8. However, it is expected that Registration income can be increased by £42k through maximising income growth in the non-statutory areas as follows:

- **Ceremonies at Approved Venues in Hammersmith Town Hall and throughout the borough – £28k expected income growth**

It is proposed that the pricing tiers are adjusted to more clearly differentiate between peak and non-peak times. Additionally, new charges are proposed for ceremonies at approved venues after 6pm. The proposed charges are competitive and are expected to generate an additional £28k per year. This is a commercial service where customers have the choice of using Hammersmith and Fulham Register Office or they can chose to go elsewhere.

- **Certificates – £14k expected income growth**

The charge for the issue of certificates is a statutory fee set out by Central Government – there are no proposed changes for 2016/17. For certificates from historical records, the current £10 fee covers the statutory cost of the certificate only. A priority certificate fee was introduced in 2014/15, giving customers the opportunity to apply for a certificate to be issued on the same day. This has been well received by customers who have a need for a certificate to be issued urgently. Following a review of the initial take up, it is proposed that the fee for this premium service be increased from £10 to £20. This is in line with other boroughs. It is expected that this will generate an additional £14k per year. The priority application is a commercial service where customers have the choice of using it or choosing to wait for the standard turnaround time. With all certificate applications customers have the choice of applying for them directly from the General Register Office or applying for them at the Register Office where the event is registered.

Benchmarking

5.9. Benchmarking has been undertaken against other local authorities. The proposed fees and charges are in line with neighbouring boroughs as set out in Appendix 1 for ceremony charges.

Planned Service Improvements

5.10. Other service improvements that will assist in bringing in additional income are listed below:

- Increased opening hours (from 9am to 5pm) Monday to Friday

- Web improvement project and improved marketing of the service
- Telephony improvement project, improved contact channels
- Choice of additional licenced venues
- Once Phase 2 of the service review is completed the service will be going out to advertise for Registration Officer roles in order to fill the vacant posts (there will be eight vacant posts)

5.11. It is anticipated that business will continue to grow and we will secure an increase in ceremony bookings in comparison to 2015/16.

6. OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

6.1. The proposals set out in this report will enable the income targets for each Registration service to be realistic and achievable whilst removing an ongoing budget pressure in this area.

6.2. If the proposals set out in this report are not approved the budgeted income targets will not be achievable in full and the budget pressure will be ongoing.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1. Benchmarking of fees and charges and an additional income stream has taken place to ensure that the proposed fees are in line with neighbouring boroughs and allow the service to remain competitive whilst creating additional commercial opportunities.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATION

8.1. There are no equalities implications as a result of the proposals set out in this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. If the Council is required by statute to provide a certain service then we must do so. If that service has a set statutory fee or charge then we must charge only that fee or charge for the service.

9.2. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 sets out the power to charge for discretionary services. Under section 93(1), the Council may charge a person for providing a service to him/her if the authority is authorised (not required) by an enactment to provide the service (i.e. it is discretionary in nature), and the person has agreed to its provision. Under section 93(2), this does not apply if the authority has power from elsewhere to charge for the provision of the service, or is expressly prohibited from charging for it.

9.3. Section 93(3) requires that the power to charge is subject to a duty to secure that the income from charges does not exceed the costs of provision. Under s.93(5), an authority may set charges as it thinks fit and may, in particular, charge only some persons for providing a service, or charge different persons different amounts for the provision of a service.

9.4. Where a local authority is planning on charging for a discretionary service under s.93 LGA 2003, the legislation restricts the amount that can be charged, to the effect that (taking one financial year with another) income should not exceed the cost of provision. The approach of s.93 allows local authorities greater flexibility to balance their accounts over a period of time, and recognises the practical difficulties for a local authority in estimating the charges for a discretionary service at the outset.

9.5. The Local Government Association Guide suggests Councils should be prepared to explain the context of the charges, how they have been assessed and the basis upon which they are calculated. They should also explain the context in which the new (or additional) charges are being considered.

9.6. Legal comments completed by Joyce Golder, Solicitor.

10. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The proposals to uplift fees and charges and permanently align the budgets with projected demand are supported from a financial perspective.

10.2. Implications completed by Kellie Gooch – Head of Finance Environmental Services. Telephone 020 8753 2203.

11. IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS

11.1. There are no implications for business as a result of the proposals set out in this report.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

12.1. The risk has been identified previously by the service department and in accordance with the risk management framework in operation. Compliance with national policies can have an impact on the risk management of the Council in this case the risk of Central Government changes to the application process has impacted on the reduction of income. There are no wider risk management implications associated with the report recommendations.

12.2. Implications completed by Michael Sloniowski, Shared Services Risk Manager telephone 020 8753 2587.

13. COMMERCIAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

13.1. Section 9 in this report sets out the extent to which charges can be levied lawfully. The service needs to be confident that it will not make a surplus from year to year. The service needs to be in a position to demonstrate that this is the case.

13.2. The commercial opportunities lie in services ancillary to those areas covered in this report and will be explored with the Commercial Director.

13.3. There are no procurement implications.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	None	N/A	

LIST OF APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Registrars Fees & Charges Proposals 2016/17

Appendix 2- Ceremony Fees Benchmarking 2016/17

APPENDIX 1

Registrars Fees & Charges Proposals 2016/17

Description	2015/16	Annual % Change	2016/17
Marriage/Civil Partnership/Naming Ceremonies/Vow Renewals/Certificates			
Register Office, Hammersmith Town Hall			
Monday - Thursday	£46.00	0.0%	£46.00
Rose Room, Hammersmith Town Hall			
Monday - Thursday	N/A	New Service	£120.00
Friday	N/A	New Service	£190.00
*Riverside Room, Hammersmith Town Hall			
Monday - Thursday	£135.00	3.7%	£140.00
Friday	£208.00	1%	£210.00
Saturday	£208.00	1%	£210.00
Mayor's Parlour, Hammersmith Town Hall			
Monday - Thursday	N/A	New Service	£250.00
Friday	N/A	New Service	£300.00
Saturday	N/A	New Service	£350.00
** Approved Venues			
Monday - Thursday	£348.00	0.6%	£350.00
Friday	£434.00	3.7%	£450.00
Saturday	£434.00	3.7%	£450.00
Sunday/Bank Holidays	£563.00	-2.3%	£550.00
Monday - Thursday (after 6pm)	N/A	New Service	£600.00
Friday (after 6pm)	N/A	New Service	£650.00
Saturday (after 6pm)	N/A	New Service	£700.00
Sunday/Bank Holidays (after 6pm)	N/A	New Service	£800.00
Naming Ceremonies / Vow Renewals			
Monday - Thursday (Riverside Room)	N/A	New Service	£140.00
Friday (Riverside Room)	N/A	New Service	£210.00
Saturday (Riverside Room)	N/A	New Service	£210.00
Monday - Thursday (Approved Venues)	N/A	New Service	£350.00
Friday (Approved Venues)	N/A	New Service	£450.00
Saturday (Approved Venues)	N/A	New Service	£450.00
Sunday/Bank Holidays (Approved Venues)	N/A	New Service	£550.00
Attendance at place of Worship			
Attendance at place of worship	£86.00	0.0%	£86.00
Certificates			
Certificate at time of registration	£4.00	0.0%	£4.00
Certificate in current register	£7.00	0.0%	£7.00

Description	2015/16	Annual % Change	2016/17
Certificate from historical records	£10.00	0.0%	£10.00
Same day service certificates	N/A	New Service	£20.00
Cancellation & Booking Changes			
Cancellation fee for notices	£35.00	Remove	Remove
Non-refundable deposit per notice	N/A	New Service	£35.00
Couples cancellation fee for notice	£70.00	Remove	Remove
Non-refundable deposit ceremony booking	N/A	New Service	£100.00
Amendment fee ceremony booking	N/A	New Service	£35.00
Cancellation of ceremony fee	£35.00	Remove	Remove
Rebook Monday-Thursday RO/Riverside Room	£35.00	Remove	Remove
Rebook Friday/Saturday Riverside Room	£45.00	Remove	Remove
Approved Venue cancellation/rebooking	£70.00	Remove	Remove
Attending rehearsal at Approved Venue	£140.00	Remove	Remove
Postal Charges - at cost	At Cost	0.0%	At Cost
Nationality Checking Service (NCS) Fees			
Adult - Weekday	£50.00	0.0%	£50.00
Minor - Weekday	£30.00	0.0%	£30.00
Adult - Saturday	£60.00	0.0%	£60.00
Minor - Saturday	£40.00	0.0%	£40.00
Citizenship Ceremony fees			
Private ceremony - weekday	£100.00	0.0%	£100.00
Private ceremony - Saturday	£125.00	0.0%	£125.00
Group Ceremony - Saturday	£50.00	0.0%	£50.00
Settlement Checking			
Adult - weekday	£80.00	0.0%	£80.00
Dependent -weekday	£25.00	0.0%	£25.00

*Riverside Room – There service requests an average increase to 1.9% above the current rate as the capacity of the room has increased from 30 to 40 people and the room has been tidied up, organised and made more attractive with additions in décor.

**Approved venues – Although some increases are above 1.1% the average of the increases are 1.4% due to the small increase for Monday to Thursday and the decrease of 2.3% for Sunday.

APPENDIX 2

Ceremony Fees Benchmarking 2016/17

Attendance at outside venues

	Monday - Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday/ Bank Holiday	Monday - Thursday after 6 pm	Friday after 6 pm	Saturday after 6 pm	Sunday/ Bank Holiday after 6pm
<i>LBHF</i>	£350	£450	£450	£550	£600	£650	£700	£800
<i>RBKC</i>	£505	£505	£610	£735	£605	£605	£710	£835
<i>WCC</i>	£525	£525	£595	£710	£710	£710	£710	N/A
<i>Brent</i>	£320	£320	£350	£400	£400	£400	£500	£600
<i>Ealing</i>	£350	£400	£450	£650	£400	£450	£500	£750
<i>Wandsworth</i>	£295	£295	£350	£380	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Town Hall - Small Room

	Monday - Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday/ Bank Holiday	Monday - Thursday after 6 pm	Friday after 6 pm	Saturday after 6 pm	Sunday/ Bank Holiday after 6pm
<i>LBHF</i>	£120	£190	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>RBKC</i>	£270	£270	£310	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>WCC</i>	£355	£405	£405	£465	£405	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Brent</i>	£135	£160	£230	£300	£280	£280	£350	£400
<i>Ealing</i>	£145	£170	£250	£325	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Wandsworth</i>	£150	£100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Town Hall- Large Room

	Monday - Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday/ Bank Holiday	Monday - Thursday after 6 pm	Friday after 6 pm	Saturday after 6 pm	Sunday/ Bank Holiday after 6pm
<i>LBHF</i>	£140	£210	£210	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>RBKC</i>	£505	£505	£610	£735	£605	£605	£710	£835
<i>WCC</i>	£460	£495	£495	£595	£495	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Brent</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Ealing</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Wandsworth</i>	£150	£150	£195	£220	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

