

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 FEBRUARY 2010

CITY SERVICES - CULTURE AND TOURISM REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2009/2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

Link to Strategic Priorities

Learning City

C101 Delivering customer focused services

C103 Efficient and effective Council

1.0 WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE COMMITTEE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the review of the Culture and Tourism Fees and Charges Policy and to seek further comments from members.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In February 2009 a review was undertaken of all fees and charges across the former Community and Cultural Services Directorate. Following the review revised fees and charges were agreed for a range of services.
- 2.2 In May 2009, the revised fees and charges were implemented across Culture and Tourism.
- 2.3 In September 2009, at a meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee concerns were raised in respect of the new charges and it was agreed that a review would be undertaken six months after the introduction of the revised charges.
- 2.4 It was also agreed that the review would examine the following areas:-
- The current level of fees and charges across Culture and Tourism.
 - Concerns raised by Members and customer complaints
 - The impact of increased fees and charges on customer satisfaction
 - The impact of increased fees and charges on performance outturns
 - The impact of increased fees and charges on income
 - The level of income generated through fees and charges
 - Current concessionary rates and entitlements to them
 - Consultation with members of the Nifty Fifties including a review of the group membership, programme and admission charges
 - Work with colleagues to ensure alignment with other council services in respect of concessionary entitlements to services
 - Work with colleagues to ensure alignment with other council services in respect of meeting / room hire charging policy
 - A review of the marketing of fees and charges

3.0 CURRENT FEES AND CHARGES

3.1 The table below details the fees and charges applied prior to May 2009 and the revised charges introduced from May 2009.

Service	Fees / Charges prior to May 2009	Fees / Charges applied from May 2009
Reservations	£0.55	£0.70
*Inter-library Loans	£1.60	£4.00
Overdue Charges	£0.12 (Adult) £0.06 (Concessions) Free - Children	£0.20 (Adult) £0.10 (Concessions) Free - Children
Photocopies	£0.10 to £1.05	£0.20 to £1.50
Computer Printouts	£0.25	£0.50
Admission Charges to Nifty Fifty Meetings	£1.00 (including refreshments and programme)	£2.50 (including refreshments and programme)
Laminating Services	£0.50 to £1.00	£0.55 to £1.10
Audio Loans / DVD Rental	£0.85 to £2.65	£1.00 to £3.00
Fax Services	£0.55 to 2.00	£1.00 to £2.00
Meeting/Conference Room, Equipment Hire and provision of refreshments	Range £15 to £35 per hour	Range £15 to £50 per hour

- The increased charge for an inter-library loan reflects the cost of obtaining items from the British Library which is now in excess of £8.00.
- Room hire agreements are subject to a Room Hire Policy. Actual charges reflect the nature of the booking organisation with reduced rates being applied to voluntary and community groups as appropriate.

4.0 CUSTOMER / MEMBER FEEDBACK

4.1 Since the implementation of the revised charges in May 2009 Culture and Tourism have received a total of sixteen customer complaints.

4.2 Twelve of the complaints have been in respect of the increased charges for printing. The remaining complaints relate to Meeting Room hire and the cost of admission charges to Nifty Fifty Meetings.

4.3 Following the concerns raised by Members and customers a number of actions were taken to address immediate issues including:-

4.3.1. Community and voluntary groups were contacted to draw up formal agreements supporting the continuation of free or concessionary room hire charges for community organisations.

4.3.2. The existing policy of supporting children and young people through the provision of 10 free printouts or photocopies for homework purposes was extended to job seekers and also to unlimited printouts for all users accessing Sunderland.gov.uk

5.0 IMPACT ON BUSINESS/PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 Library performance returns show that revised charges have not impacted upon core service areas with issues, reservations, active membership and ICT usage showing an increase on 2008/09.

	April - November 08	April - November 09
Total Issues	873,040	881,555
Total Reservations	28,573	31,026
Active Members	48,858 (08/09)	50,378
ICT Usage	90,209 hours (Apr-Oct 08)	92,502 hours (Apr-Oct 09)

6.0 INCOME

- 6.1 The impact of the increased fees and charges on income is shown in the table below. As can be seen all areas of income have shown an increase on the same period in 2008 with the exception of Nifty Fifty Meetings.

Income	April - November 08	April - November 09
Overdue charges	£24,583.37	£31,352.28
Reservations	£2,144.59	£2,759.55
Computer Printouts	£8,433.97	£9,741.77
Room Bookings	£9,313.46	£14,486.30
Nifty Fifties	£531.91	£418.25
Income	£45,007.30	£58,758.15

7.0 COMPARATIVE SERVICES

- 7.1 Meeting/Conference Room Hire - a comparative exercise of current charges for facility hire across the city has shown that charges for meeting room hire on first impression appear high. It must be noted however that many groups and organisations are subject to reduced charges as part of the pricing policy and these are applied across the board. Differences in accommodation facilities and location must also be taken into consideration when comparing charges.

Room Hire Charges - Range	
Culture and Tourism	£15 - £50 per hour
Bunny Hill Centre	£5 - £17.50 per hour
Civic Centre	£20 - £50 per half day
Crowtree Leisure Centre	£17.85 – £26.25 per hour
Houghton Sports Centre	£8 - £23 per hour
Northumbria Centre	£17.85 - £23.10 per hour
Sunderland Aquatic Centre	£10 - £30 per hour
Sunderland Tennis Centre	From £17 per hour or £85 per day
Washington Leisure Centre	From £17.85 per hour

- 7.2 Printout Charges - a comparative exercise for printout charges has shown that Sunderland is high in comparison to neighbouring library authorities.

Printout Charges - Range	
Sunderland	50p per printout
Durham	10p - 40p
Gateshead	10p - 50p
Newcastle	10p - 20p
North Tyneside	10p - 30p
South Tyneside	10p - 50p

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This report has been produced in response to concerns raised regarding current levels of fees and charges. Following the review it is recommended that:-
- 8.1.1 Further consultation be undertaken with the Nifty Fifties group. This could not be carried out within the timescale of this report as it is considered that a wider consultation examining not just fees is needed to inform the future of the Nifty Fifties group. The consultation will look at group membership, programme and admission charges.
- 8.1.2 In response to Customer and Member concerns and the findings of the review in respect of print charges, the Library Service will implement a reduced charge in respect of this area. It is recommended that a reduced charge of 35p per print be applied from 1 April 2010. This will be carried out in consultation and agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Attractive and Inclusive City.
- 8.1.3 Room/Conference hire will continue to be monitored closely and colleagues will undertake a review of the pricing policy to ensure it meets the needs of the community and is consistent with other policies implemented across the City Services Directorate.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 Members of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider and comment on the contents of this report.