

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

05 January 2011

**Joint Report of Central Services Director, Director of Finance and Information
Technology Manager**

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision

1 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2011/12

This report brings forward for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2011/12 proposals in respect of those fees and charges that are the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Finance, and also those fees and charges where there is no appropriate Advisory Board.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out for 2011/12 the proposals for those fees and charges which fall within the remit of this Board and also those fees and charges where there is no appropriate Committee or Advisory Board.
- 1.1.2 The budgetary guidance issued to Chief Officers for the 2011/12 budget cycle, and approved by this Board and endorsed by Cabinet, reiterated the objective to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere. In bringing forward proposals officers have paid due regard to the guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges previously approved by this Board and endorsed by Cabinet.
- 1.1.3 The proposals regarding fees and charges outlined in this report are incorporated within the Revenue Estimates to be found elsewhere on this agenda. Any changes required following this meeting will be incorporated before the Estimates are presented to Cabinet on 1 February 2011. The proposals are set out on a Service by Service basis with the recommendations at the end of each section.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

1.2 Photocopying Charges

- 1.2.1 A photocopying service is offered for members of the public calling at the council's main offices or requiring copies of Council documents sent by post. The current charges are :-

- 1.2.2 10p for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate.
- 1.2.3 These charges are intended to cover the costs of the photocopy meter charge (including toner), paper, and an allowance towards the staff time in looking out documents and postage where appropriate.
- 1.2.4 The level of charge was reduced in 2007/08 after remaining static for a number of years to comply with Freedom of Information requirements. The marginal cost per copy (including paper) is now approximately 1p per copy. The income to the Authority for 2010/11 is £25 to date (December). Comparative charges in neighbouring authorities have been somewhat difficult to ascertain and appear to vary considerably. It is, however, considered appropriate to retain a charge in cases where copies of documents cannot be provided by email or fax but it is suggested that the current charge be maintained.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet be recommended to retain the current photocopying charges of £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate.

1.3 Charges for Agendas and Reports

- 1.3.1 Agendas and reports are made available free of charge to the public where single copies are requested. Some private individuals and commercial organisations request posted copies of particular agendas and reports on an annual basis and for these a charge (to cover production costs and postage) is made. The current charge for one municipal year's supply is £45 (inclusive of VAT) for Area Planning Committees and £32 (inclusive of VAT) for all other meetings. **[Annex 1]** shows comparative charges for neighbouring authorities.
- 1.3.2 Demand for pre-purchased supplies of agendas remains relatively low and relates mainly to Area Planning Committees although a limited number of copies of other agendas are also supplied. The income to this Authority for such sales in 2010/11 is estimated at £135 and can be anticipated to decrease further as more people access agendas via the Council's website. The cost of production and postage of an average agenda remains similar to last year. Members may therefore consider it appropriate to retain the charge at the current level.
- 1.3.3 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet be recommended to maintain the annual charges for agendas and reports supplied via the post to £45 (inclusive of VAT) for Area Planning Committees and £32 (inclusive of VAT) for all other meetings.

LEGAL SERVICES

1.4 Legal Fees Payable by Third Parties

- 1.4.1 From time to time it happens that the Council's legal fees can be recovered from third parties, for example costs in connection with section 106 agreements. Our level of fees follows the rates published by the Ministry of Justice which are reviewed regularly and are currently as follows:

Solicitors with over 8 years post qualification experience including at least 8 years relevant experience	£217
Solicitors and legal executives with over 4 years post qualification experience including at least 4 years relevant experience	£192
Other solicitors and legal executives and fee earners of equivalent experience	£161
Trainee solicitors, paralegals and fee earners of equivalent experience	£118

- 1.4.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Council's charges continue to follow the rates published by the Secretary of State.

1.5 Licensing and Registration Fees

- 1.5.1 In preparing this review of fees, we have continued the objective of previous years of seeking to recover the greater proportion of the cost of the licensing function.
- 1.5.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet be recommended to adopt the table of proposed fees, as set out in **Annex 2**, with effect from 1 April 2011.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

1.6 Administrative Charges for Postal Addresses (Street Naming and Numbering)

- 1.6.1 We are continuing to find considerable resistance to the level of our fees for this service, the more so as our fees are currently about three times the local average. This has led to a reduction in the number of requests and, in consequence, our fee income.
- 1.6.2 For naming a new street and numbering properties on it, we are recommending that the fees be increased on the same basis as before, namely by 3%, rounded up to the nearest whole £1 for fees under £100 and £5 for fees over £100, with a higher increase for dealing with new streets with more than 65 new dwellings on them. This reflects the actual cost of dealing with such applications.

- 1.6.3 In previous years we have made a charge for weekly information bulletins on new address information. This information is now distributed via the National Land and Property Gazetteer and so this service is discontinued.

	Existing	Proposed
For new developments, to name new street/s and allocate numbers and addresses to new properties:		
Up to 30 new properties	310.00	320.00
31 - 65 properties	460.00	475.00
Over 65 properties	615.00	635.00
To name/number new properties on existing streets:		
New commercial developments for sale or rent	160.00	165.00
Rename/number existing residential property	45.00	47.00
Rename/number existing commercial property	120.00	125.00
To issue a duplicate statutory certificate of (re-) naming and/or numbering	76.00	80.00

- 1.6.4 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet be recommended to adopt the table of proposed charges set out above with effect from 1 April 2011.

1.7 Legal Implications

- 1.7.1 As set out above.

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.8.1 As set out above.

1.9 Risk Assessment

- 1.9.1 As part of the review of fees and charges Chief Officers will consider the risks associated with any proposals.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Claire Fox
Ilan Henderson
Katie Iggulden

Julie Beilby
Central Services Director

Sharon Shelton
Director of Finance

Alan Burch
Information Technology Manager

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The charges detailed in this report are payable by all members of the community.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	As above.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Not applicable.

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.