

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

22 September 2009

**Report of the Central Services Director
and the Director of Finance**

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 TONBRIDGE CASTLE GATEHOUSE CHARGES

Summary

This report recommends revised charges for the Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse tourist attraction for implementation from 1 April 2010.

1.1 Gatehouse Charges – Background

- 1.1.1 As Members may be aware, the charges for Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse are reviewed at this time for implementation in the next financial year. This allows the revised charges to be incorporated in tourism marketing material, much of which is published during the winter months.
- 1.1.2 Visitors to the Gatehouse continue to be very positive about the experience and the value for money offered. The schools market has shown growth this year, but it is essential to remain competitive in this market.
- 1.1.3 A feedback form has been introduced for monitoring school groups. To date all elements of the service provided at the Gatehouse have been rated as either “very good” or “excellent”.

1.2 Proposed Charges

- 1.1.4 The current 2009/10 charges for a number of neighbouring attractions, along with the current charges for Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse are shown at **[Annex 1]**. Members will be aware that when reviewing charges, the general approach is to consider not only the prevailing inflation figures, but to also take account of competitor charges and local market conditions. The following table shows the proposed charges:

	Existing Charge 2009/10 (£)	Proposed Charge 2010/11 (£)
Adult	6.20	6.50
Concessions (Jun/OAP/Student/Leisure Pass)	3.70	3.90
Family ticket	18.00	19.00
Education Facilities (1 teacher free per 10 children. For special needs groups, carers admitted free as required)	58.00	60.00
Season ticket (adult)	16.00	18.00
Season ticket (concession)	12.00	14.00

It is estimated that the proposed increases will provide £1,000 of additional income.

1.2 Legal Implications

1.2.1 None.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.3.1 These proposals are in accordance with the guidance in the Council's budget strategy.

1.3.2 Feedback from customers identifies that the charging regime provides value for money for casual visitors as well as group visits.

1.4 Risk Assessment

1.4.1 There is a risk that excessive increases in charges could deter visitors and lead to a fall in overall income. Dialogue with customers and comparison with other attractions has been taken into consideration in bringing these charges forward.

1.5 Policy Considerations

1.5.1 Community – These proposals will maintain access to the local heritage by all sectors of the community.

1.5.2 Young People – The educational elements of visits to the Castle are an important aspect. The educational visits are designed to encourage “hands-on” learning and continue to be well received by the visit organisers and the children,

1.6 Recommendations

1.6.1 The proposed charges have been brought forward to reflect the current market conditions.

1.6.2 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that:

- 1) the proposed charges for Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse as outlined above be agreed for implementation from 1 April 2010; and
- 2) these charges be reflected in the appropriate tourism marketing material.

The Central Services Director confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendations, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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