

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD**

**01 September 2016**

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

**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**

**The report recommends revised charges for the Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse tourist attraction for implementation from 1 April 2017.**

**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 prices 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 and wedding markets have shown growth this year, but tours are stable. However, it is essential to remain competitive in this market. Tonbridge Castle saw over 3000 paying customers during 2015/16 with income amounting to over £20,000.
- 1.1.3 Feedback forms for monitoring customer comments have been introduced for schools and general visits. To date all elements of the service provided at the Gatehouse have been rated as either “very good” or “excellent”. Trip Adviser reviews currently amount to 101 comments which show customer satisfaction levels of 4 out of 5 confirming the messages received on feedback forms.
- 1.1.4 The current 2016/17 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 2016/17 (£)	Proposed Charge 2017/18 (£)
Adult	8.50	8.90
Concessions (Jun/OAP/Student/Leisure Pass)	5.00	5.50
Family ticket	23.00	24.00
Education Facilities includes toys, dressing up clothes, games, paper, pens and 2 tour guides (1 teacher free per 10 children. For special needs groups, carers admitted free as required)	65.00	70.00
Season ticket (adult)	20.00	20.00
Season ticket (concession)	15.00	15.00

It is estimated that the proposed increases will provide approximately £1,400 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 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.5.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **1.6 Policy Considerations**

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

1.6.2 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.

## 1.7 Recommendations

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

1.7.2 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 2017; and
- 2) these charges be reflected in the appropriate tourism marketing material.

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

Background papers:

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Nil

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