
Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

14 January 2008

Report of the Director of City Strategy and Director of Resources

REVENUE BUDGET 2008/09 – CITY STRATEGY FEES AND CHARGES

Summary

1. This report advises Members of the proposed fees and charges for the City Strategy portfolio for the financial year 2008/09 and the anticipated increase in income which they will generate. The Annex to the report sets out the detail of the individual charges.

Background

2. The fees and charges for City Strategy are complex and varied. Some are controlled by regulation, some by national guidelines and others by market forces or the cost of administering the service. In the City Strategy Revenue and Capital budget report elsewhere on the agenda, Members are advised of the effect on the service of budget reductions. The level of fees and charges has been set against this background of severe financial constraint and service reductions. Income from fees and charges is a key factor in setting budgets and totals approximately £10.2 million for the City Strategy portfolio. In ensuring a balanced budget, it is therefore essential that income is at least maintained, if not improved.

Proposals

3. This section sets out the key elements for Members' consideration. Only those with significant income are highlighted.

Transport

Residents Parking

4. Residents parking schemes allow residents and visitors to park near their property. The council recovers the costs of administration and enforcement of residents parking schemes through charges for permits. For 2008-09 it is proposed to increase charges by the rate of inflation with a residents permit increasing from £88 to £90, with a 5% rise for second permits and 10% rise for third and fourth permits. However, there is no increase proposed for the price of visitor permits.

Car Parking

5. The current budget for parking income totals £6.4 million and is therefore very important to the overall budget.
6. Car park prices have remained fixed since 2004/05 with the exception of reducing the cost of parking at Foss Bank to 70p an hour in 2006/07 and the decision to stop charging for Minster badge holders in the evening from August 2007. This has put pressure on other budgets as costs have increased without any additional income raised from the assets.
7. As part of the budget consideration it is proposed to freeze all parking charges for 2008-09 for Minster badge holders and to increase charges in standard stay car parks for non-residents by 20p from £1.30 to £1.50 per hour. The cost for on-street car parking is proposed to increase from £1.40 to £1.50 per hour. The arrangements in place at Micklegate and Priory Street for parking under one hour will continue.

Penalty Charge Notices

8. The Traffic Management Act 2004 introduces new penalties for offences commencing on 31st March 2007. Depending on the seriousness of the offence the penalty will either increase from £60 to £70 (mainly for on-street offences) or decrease to £50 (mainly for off-street offences). A full report outlining all the changes is being taken to the Executive on 15th January 2008.

Cycle Training

9. Fees for cycle training have been frozen for the last three years. A significant source of income over this time has also come from training cycle trainers from other local authorities but recently demand has dropped leading to a shortfall in income in 2007/08. An increase in fees would help to reflect the overall cost of training provision as well as alleviating the income shortfall.

Planning

Building Control

10. Following the deregulation of the building control function Members have discretion to set the fees for this service. The Council has agreed to participate in the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Charges Scheme in which all participating authorities agree to set their fees within a + or -10 % band. York, in common with many other authorities, has adopted the prescribed fees. The fees cover three areas of activity: - domestic alterations, housing developments and commercial developments. Due to Governmental guidance on Building Control income and use of surpluses, it is not intended to increase charges in the forthcoming year. It is however intended to reduce the number of charge bands within the fees to simplify matters for customers.

Land Charges

11. In 2006/7 Members established the fee levels for over the counter searches of £133 for domestic properties, £155 for business properties, £40 Solicitors Optional enquiries and £98 for electronic searches received through NLIS (National Land Information Service).

13. As advised to Members previously, a report was to be published by Government, concerning the way fees for Local Land Charge services were set. This report has been delayed and the draft report has only recently (December 2007) been approved by DCLG and Ministers. The report is likely to recommend that fees for local land charges search services, are set on a cost recovery basis. The consultation will take place over a 12 week period and will be linked to the publication of draft guidance on access to local authority information needed for the completion of property searches. It is anticipated that the consultation on setting fees will be published in January 2008, and dependent on the response to the respective consultation documents it is anticipated that both the access and costing guidance will be implemented on 1st June 2008. Currently work is proceeding to establish cost recovery costings for searches. When this information is available it will be necessary to amend charges accordingly.
14. A report will be brought back to Members when the guidance is issued and interpreted. Until this time it is proposed to leave fee levels at 2006/07 levels.

Planning

15. The review of planning costs and fees by DCLG has recommended the introduction of a new £85 fee to handle the discharge of conditions imposed by a planning permission for non-householder developments (£25 for householder developments).
16. Elsewhere within the report the recommendations are
 - A fee increase of 11% (£15) for householder applications
 - An overall 25% increase for other fees
 - A new maximum fee of £250,000 (or £125,000 if an outline application) for all except minerals and waste applications
17. A draft Statutory Instrument will be put before Parliament in January 2008 and, if approved, the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) Regulations 1989 would be amended. The effective date for these changes will be 6 April 2008.

Consultation

18. This paper commences the Council's budget consultation, both in terms of formal discussions with the Business and Voluntary sectors, but also as a mechanism for the public to comment on the proposals made in the report.

Options

19. Members of EMAP are asked for their comments or alternative suggestions on the fees and charges proposals shown in the Annex.

Analysis

20. All the analysis is provided in the body of the report and the annexes.

Corporate Priorities

21. Fees and Charges proposals are a key element of the Council's budget process. Where fees can increase above inflation to provide savings this can free up resources to deal with key council priorities. The use of discounted prices for short cars and those with low emissions assists in the priority to "increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport".

Implications

Financial

22. The financial implications are dealt with in the body of the report.

Other Implications

23. There are no Human Resources, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder or Information Technology, Property or Other implications to this report

Risk Management

24. The budget for city strategy is supported by income from fees and charges totalling £10.2m. Fees and charges levels are therefore of major significance in ensuring a balanced budget is set. The income from fees and charges will continue to be monitored through two mid-year monitoring reports and the final Revenue Outturn report for the year.

Recommendations

25. The Executive Member Advisory Panel is invited to provide comments on the fees and charges proposals for consultation for 2008/09 contained in this report.

Reason: As part of the consultation for the 2008/09 budget setting process.

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Annex – Fees and Charges Proposals 2008/09