



Executive
13th March 2006

**Report from the Director of
Environment and Culture**

For Action/Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

BACES Fees and Charges 2006/07

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-05/06-058

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report sets out proposals for changes to the Fees and Charges Schedule of Brent Adult and Community Education Service, which is part of the Arts and Learning Division of the Environment and Culture Department.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That Members approve BACES' fees and charges for the academic year 2006/07 as set out in Appendix A.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Brent Adult and Community Education Service is Brent Council's direct provider of adult education. It receives all of its funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which itself is responsible to the Department for Education and Skills from which it receives its funding. BACES does not receive any financial contribution from Brent Council funds. The level of grant allocated to the service from the LSC therefore determines fees and charges annually.

- 3.2 Officers have taken into account the following principles in proposing the fees and charges for the academic year 2006/07:
- i) Fees should remain affordable in order to encourage participation in learning, particularly for learners from under-represented and hard to reach groups, in accordance with the mission
 - ii) That fee setting takes into account the recent Learning and Skills (LSC) policy which reduces the level of subsidy to those learners not in the national fee remission categories
 - iii) That fees compare favourably with neighbouring boroughs, and particularly those that are part of the London West LSC region
 - iv) Fee concessions are comparable to other local authority adult and community learning services in the London West LSC region.
- 3.3 For the academic year 2005/06, officers were able to recommend additional concessions for groups of learners for who no subsidy was provided by the LSC. This included:
- i) learners on means tested benefits enrolling on non-accredited 'direct progression route' courses, i.e. non-accredited courses that BACES had identified as a progression route to an accredited course
 - ii) retired men and women over 60 who are not in receipt of Pension Credit
 - iii) learners in receipt of means-tested benefits on any non-accredited course
- 3.4 In allocating its funding in the academic year 2005/06, the LSC based its calculations on the assumption that learners paying the full fee for courses contributed **27.5%** of the actual full cost of the course. From September 2006 the LSC is adjusting the grant based on the principle that full fee paying learners not in the national fee remission categories will contribute **32.5%** to the course fee, and is adjusting the funding given to BACES accordingly. An early indication shows that BACES' funding from the LSC, in respect of the assumed fee contribution, will reduce by £15,854.
- 3.5 Currently, a significant proportion, (approximately 70%), of learners fall into the national fee remission categories - where fees are fully waived - or receive a 66% reduction in fees.
- 3.6 The proposed revised charges for 2006/07 are set out in Appendix A. The recommended changes reflect the national LSC policy regarding fee contribution outlined above. In summary the proposals are:

- i) to increase the full fee from £2.20 per hour to £2.35 per hour. This takes into account a notional increase for inflation and a 5% increase in contribution toward the full cost of the course.
- ii) to reduce the concession for learners on means tested benefits studying on non-accredited direct progression route courses from nil fee to a 66% reduction, in line with other London boroughs
- iii) to reduce the level of concession for learners over 60 not in receipt of Pension Credit in line with other London boroughs

3.7 The following table show a comparison between Brent's proposed charges and other West London boroughs. The table demonstrates that even with the proposed increases, BACES fees and charges still remain lower than those of neighbours:

| Category | <i>Brent 2005- 2006</i> | Brent 2006-2007 (Proposed) | Hillingdon 2006-07 (Proposed) | Hounslow 2006-07 (Proposed) | Hammersmith and Fulham 2006-07 (Proposed) |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Full fee – Accredited and non-accredited courses | <i>£ 2.20 per hour.</i> | £2.35 per hour. | £2.37 per hour (non- accredited courses) | £2.50 per hour (non- accredited courses) | £3.36 per hour (non- accredited courses) |
| Concessions – non-accredited courses: <i>Retired men and women over the age of 60</i> | <i>£0.75 per hour</i> | £1.00 per hour | £1.66 per hour | £1.88 per hour | <i>Not known</i> |

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Income from fees and charges form an integral element of service budget projections for the year. The projected income from fees and charges for the academic year 2006/07 will be £181,000.
- 4.2 Initial discussions with the LSC in relation to BACES' budget for the academic year 2006/07 indicate that there will be a significant reduction in the funding for non-accredited courses by approximately 10% including inflation. This is likely to have an impact on the amount of courses the service can offer. The funding for accredited courses is still under review.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications regarding the change in fees.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is available on request for the proposed fee policy.
- 6.2 It is possible that some of the proposed revisions to the fee policy will affect certain groups of learners. In particular it will affect:
- i) Learners over 60 not in receipt of Pension Credit who are being asked to contribute more to the full cost of the course. This would affect approximately 10% of learners. This could have the impact of learners over 60 not being able to afford to enrol on multiple courses. However, it must be noted that even though the LSC does not recognise this group of learners as belonging to the national fee remission categories, officers are proposing to offer concessions, which compare favourably with other West London boroughs (see table in 3.7 above).
 - ii) Learners on means tested benefits studying on previously identified 'non-accredited direct progression route' courses such as Shiatsu Massage for beginners. The proposals are asking learners in this category to contribute 33% of the recommended course fee. This would affect just over another 2% of learners, but again compares favourably with other West London boroughs. (See Appendix A)
- 6.3 BACES has readjusted learner number targets with the LSC to allow for a potential decline in enrolments for Adult and Community Learning courses. However, in Skills for Life (literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages), BACES is consistently achieving above LSC targets for learner numbers.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 No staffing implications arise from this report.

8.0 Environmental Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct environment implications arising from this report

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the compilation of this report:

“Priorities for Success – Funding for Learning and Skills”
Learning and Skills Council, October 2005

Report 002 to the Executive 7th July 2005 – BACES - Fees and Charges
2005/06

Contact Officers

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Sue Hasty,
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APPENDIX A

Proposed BACES FEES AND CHARGES 2006/07

1. Service Charges

BACES produces an annual fee schedule which is agreed by members. The proposed target for fees to be collected in the Academic Year 2006 – 2007 is £181K. Progress against achieving this target is monitored on a quarterly basis.

2. Fee Schedule

The table below gives a summary of the proposed BACES fee schedule for academic year 2006-2007.

| | | Brent 2005-2006 | Brent 2006-2007 |
|----|--|--|---|
| 1. | Full fee –Accredited and non-accredited courses | £2.20 per hour. | £2.35 per hour. |
| 2. | 16 – 19 year olds on all courses | No fee | No fee |
| 3. | Concessions – non-accredited courses Those in receipt of a means tested benefit: <i>Direct Progression Route courses</i> <i>Other non-accredited courses</i> a) All students attending courses specifically designed for adults with learning difficulties or disabilities b) Students on Skills for Life courses (literacy, language and numeracy) c) Retired men and women over the age of 60 | No fee £0.75 per hour No fee No fee £0.75 per hour | <i>No longer a category</i> £0.78 per hour No fee No fee £1.00 per hour |
| 4. | Concessions –Accredited courses Those in receipt of means tested benefit (including Pension Credit) a) Retired men and women over the age of 60 | No fee £0.75 per hour | No fee £1.00 per hour |