

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

EXECUTIVE MEETING

24.05.04

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ARTS & LIBRARIES

NAME OF WARD(S)

ALL

REPORT TITLE: LIFELONG LEARNING & CULTURAL SERVICES – FEES AND CHARGES SCHEDULES 2004/5

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for changes to the Fees and Charges Schedules of services in the Lifelong Learning and Cultural Services Division of Education, Arts and Libraries.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members approve BACES' fees and charges for the academic year 2004/5, as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Members approve Heritage Services' fees and charges for 2004/5, as set out in Appendices B and C.
- 2.3 That Members agree that Library Service fees and charges will be reviewed following the outcomes of the Fees and Charges Best Value Review and any changes implemented in tandem with revised opening hours later in the year.
- 2.4 That Members approve the charges for the Gordon Brown Outdoor Education Centre for the academic year 2004/5, as set out in Appendix D.
- 2.5 That Members agree that the fees and charges for the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre be reviewed by the Head of Centre and presented for Members' approval, with a view to implementation following the improvements to be put in place at the centre with the expected grant from the New Opportunities Fund.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Income from fees and charges forms an integral element of service budget projections for the year. The budgets projected for 2004/5 assume the level of fees and charges proposed within this report. In the case of the Library Service, an increase in charges from September has been assumed. Failure to agree the revised

charges, or to generate the projected income, will mean that compensatory savings have to be found from elsewhere within the service budget.

3.2 It is estimated that the revised charges will have the following impact upon the amount of income generated:

Service	Current income	Projected income 2004/5	% increase
Archive	£1,500	£2,500	66%
Museum	£2,000	£3,500	75%
Gordon Brown Centre	£215,500	£224,500	4%
BACES	£230,000	£240,000	4%

It is not anticipated that the increase in fees and charges will have a significant impact upon levels of use.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 No staffing implications arise from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Fees can be charged for further and higher education. Fees can be charged for certain library services as set out in the Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations 1991. The proposed charging scheme will be in line with these regulations. Local Education Authorities and schools cannot normally charge for the provision of education to children of compulsory school age. Museums and outdoor and environmental education centres are entitled to charge schools for their services. There is a statutory framework that regulates the extent to which fees can be recovered from parents depending on the extent to which activities fall within the national curriculum and the ability of parents to pay.

6.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Whilst increased charges could theoretically deter some disadvantaged groups, officers do not think that the proposed increases will be sufficient to prevent such groups from taking up services.

7.0 DETAIL

7.1 BACES

- 7.1.1 The basic principles underlying BACES' fees and charges are:
- a) fees should remain affordable in order to encourage participation in learning
 - b) the fee structure should be as simple as possible

- c) fees should be in line with Learning and Skills Council (LSC) guidance
 - d) full remission on fees for the national, regional and local priority areas of Basic Skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Family Learning
 - e) a move towards greater consistency with other services in the London West LSC area
- 7.1.2 The funding system currently applied by the LSC to all qualification-bearing provision in colleges, local authority adult and community learning services, and other institutions receiving “further education (FE) funding”, assumes that a proportion of a nationally agreed funding rate for each learner on a particular type of course or programme is paid by the individual learner in the form of a course fee. For those learners in receipt of means-tested benefit or on Basic Skills or ESOL courses, the LSC funds the full cost of provision and no fee is charged.
- 7.1.3 It was originally the LSC’s intention that non accredited adult and community learning (ACL) in local authorities should transfer to a comparable funding system from September 2003. However, this is now on hold whilst changes are made to the FE funding system in order to accommodate recent plans for three year funding and for a simpler mechanism. Any changes made to ACL funding are expected to mirror those in FE funding, and it would therefore be inappropriate to make major changes to ACL charges as these may need to be reversed in the near future.
- 7.1.4 The revised schedule for the academic year 2004/5 is set out in Appendix A. It is proposed that the hourly charge increases from £2.10 per hour to £2.15 per hour in order to harmonise more closely with the fees charged by other authorities in the London West area.

7.2 Heritage Services

- 7.2.1 The principles underlying Museum and Archive charges are:
- a) charges should be affordable by users and potential users in order not to discourage use
 - b) they should reasonably reflect the amount of work involved for the service
 - c) in order to maximise income, commercial users are charged a higher rate.
- 7.2.2 It is proposed that Archive charges are increased in line with the recommendations contained in Appendix B. The rationale for the increases is as follows:
- a) charges have remained at the same level for three years;
 - b) research enquiries are increasing at a rate of 5% per annum, whilst the amount of staff time available to deal with them has remained constant;
 - c) a recent benchmarking survey of archives in London demonstrated that Brent’s charges are significantly lower than the average.

7.2.3 It is not proposed to revise charges to services that will not be on offer during the closure and re-location of the Grange Museum. However, schools will still benefit from education sessions taught in the classroom. Since the charge of 50p per pupil per session was introduced in 2001, there has been no discernible drop in demand, suggesting that the average total of £12.50 per session is well within the capacity of schools to pay. It is proposed to increase the charge to £1.00 per pupil per session, bringing the rate into line with that charged by similar museum services. The proposed charges are broken down in Appendix C.

7.3 Library Service

7.3.1 It is not proposed to make any changes in the Library Service's Fees and Charges Schedule at this stage. Revised charges were introduced in September 2003. In tandem with a review of opening hours, likely to be implemented in September 2004, new charged-for services may be introduced and the schedule simplified. Charges will be benchmarked with those of other London library services over the coming months. The recommendations of the Fees and Charges Best Value Review will also be taken into account.

7.4 Outdoor and Environmental Education Centres

7.4.1 The Gordon Brown Outdoor Education Centre receives no revenue funding from the Council and operates on a full cost recovery basis. Its source of income is the fees paid by schools and groups for visits to the centre. The Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre receives a revenue budget from the Council, but is heavily reliant on the income generated by schools and other groups.

7.4.2 Increases of 4% for the autumn and spring terms, and of 5% for the summer term, are proposed for the Gordon Brown Outdoor Education centre, to take effect from September 2004 (see Appendix D). The increases reflect:

- a) the amount of income required for full cost recovery;
- b) market rates for outdoor education facilities, bearing in mind the condition of the centre;
- c) the improved facilities that will be introduced over the coming months as a result of capital expenditure and funding from the New Opportunities Fund;
- d) the need to encourage use throughout the year;
- e) differential prices for Brent and non-Brent schools.

7.4.3 It is also proposed to introduce a cancellation charge as from September 2004. In the financial year 2003/4, £12000 was lost in income to the centre through cancelled bookings that could not be filled.

7.4.4 The Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre is currently closed while a new Head of Centre is recruited. Because of the problems there have been at the centre over a number of years, and the need to re-build links with schools, it is not proposed to make any changes to fees at this stage. However, the fees and charges schedule will be revised by the new Head of Centre, in tandem with the improvements that are to be made to the centre as a result of funding from the New Opportunities Fund.

7.5 Youth Service

7.5.1 It is not proposed to make any changes to the charges made by the Youth Service for use of the centres by user groups . These may, however, be reviewed in the future as part of the service review that follows on from the recommendations of the "What Young People Want" Best Value Review or of the Property Management Best Value Review.

8.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

- i) 0001R Library Service Fees & Charges 2003
- ii) 0002R BACES Fees & Charges 2003-4

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Marianne Locke, Acting Head of Lifelong Learning and Cultural Services Chesterfield House, 9 Park Lane, Wembley Middlesex HA9 7RW.
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