

Local Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 22 October 2015

Review of Fees and Charges 2016-2017

Recommendation(s)

1. That the fees and charges proposed in Appendix two to this report be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service from April 2016.

Report of Acting Director for Place (Staffordshire County Council) and Chief Operating Officer – Resources Directorate (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

2. The Archive Service fees and charges have been reviewed on an annual basis for a number of years to allow the Service to adapt its services according to demand and cost of provision. The proposed fees and charges are recommended for approval as they represent a fair and reasonable increase.

Background

3. The standard sources for income generation for the Archive Service are: a range of copying services; the sale of photographic permits; research, transcription and certification services; sales of publications; donations; and fees for talks by and group visits to the Archive Service. In addition from 2014 the Archive Service has benefitted from income from its partnership with a commercial provider to make key archive collections available online. Each year the Service reviews its fees and charges based on:

- Staff time to deliver the service
- Cost of equipment and associated maintenance
- Postage costs
- Economic climate
- Changing technology
- Availability of resources online

4. The review is intended to be a balanced approach which encourages use of services whilst still ensuring that income is generated to support the running of such services.

5. This year the main change to the fees and charges has been the increase of the research fee as this involves staff time. This fee is the basis for other charges and means there have been increases to other fees summarised below:

- Research fee

- Quick research fee and Hospital Records search fee
- Marriage bond search fee
- Certification fee
- Copies of wills
- In house photography charge
- Publication fees
- Talks and visits charges

6. The research fee was increased last year after being held for three years. Despite the availability of parish registers online since July 2014 some researchers still request a search by staff. Since August 2015 90% of the parish registers are now online and the wills and marriage bonds are due to go online by the end of the year. The Service will continue to advise users to take advantage of the online service either free at a library in the County or City, however a request for a research by staff will incur a fee based on the time taken to search and download, print or copy the relevant document and advise on the next steps for research.

7. The use of microfiche of parish registers has reduced in some of the Service reading rooms and has meant a fall in the number of research orders compared to the same period last year. The number of orders will continue to be monitored in terms of resourcing the service in the future.

8. The charge for copies of will has been increased as by April 2015 this collection will be available online through Find My Past. Therefore requests for copies of original wills will be directed, as far as possible, via the online service. The increase in the fee sets it on a similar basis to the research fee and transcription fee for the Staffordshire Name Indexes website.

9. The publication fees have also been reviewed and increased again this year. Requests to reproduce items from collections can be time consuming involving clearing permissions with document owners and often responding at short notice. The fees charged for commercial use have been increased to take account of these factors. The community publication fees have been held to continue to support local groups who use our collections to promote awareness and understanding of the history of the county.

10. The fees for talks to groups and group visits to the Service have also been increased this year again. This involves staff time to prepare, deliver and in the case of talks travel to the venue. Talks are also beneficial in enabling the Service to engage with local groups and promote the collections and work of the Service, however the time involved does need to be reflected in the charge.

11. The review has been carried out following a benchmarking exercise with neighbouring archive services and in consultation with frontline staff and public service managers.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

In reviewing its fees the Archive Service has continued to maintain its lower research fee for people with disabilities.

Legal implications:

The content of this report complies with the joint agreement governing the work of the Joint Archive Service.

Resource and Value for money implications:

Overall the Joint Archive Service has income targets of £48, 210 which breaks down to £6,190 for the City service and £42,020 for the County service.

This report introduces new fees which offer more choice for users of the service and also represent good value for money.

Risk implications:

At this point in the year income is under target for research but photocopying is holding up. Other sources of income include the vending machine at Stafford, charges for storage of Public Records transferred early and for provision of conservation training for other archive services. These areas will help to contribute to income targets but the charges are made towards the end of the financial year.

Climate Change implications:

No significant implications.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Joint Archive Service Scale of Fees and Charges, 2015/2016	Joanna Terry/Place/ x278370
Orders and income ledgers, 2015/2016	