

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

**Report of Corporate Director of Adult and Community
Services
to
Cabinet
on
13 February 2014**

Report prepared by:
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Report Following Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Non-Residential Charging Policy

People Scrutiny Committee – Executive Councillor: Councillor Lesley Salter

A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To report on the results of consultation on proposals for changes to the current charging policy for non-residential social services, this took place between 11th November and 19th January 2014.

2. Recommendations

In the light of the relevant consultation undertaken that;

- 2.1 That the proposed changes to non-residential care charges and residential care charges as put forward at Cabinet on 17 September 2013, be approved.**
- 2.2 That the new charges commence on 7 April 2014.**
- 2.3 That the maximum charge applied to non-residential services is removed and charges will be made against the full cost of care.**
- 2.4 That transport provided at any point to, during or from day services will be charged at £2.00 per day.**
- 2.5 That a new administration charge will be made to persons wishing to enter into the Deferred Payment Scheme for residential services.**
- 2.6 Note that the above proposals form part of the associated Fees & Charges and General Fund Revenue Budget reports also on this agenda.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Proposals were made to the Cabinet on 17 September 2013, as part of the budget setting process for 2014-15, to increase income by a change to the current charging policy for non-residential services. Also to introduce a new administration charge for persons wishing to enter into the Deferred Payment scheme for residential care. Recommendations will go to Budget Cabinet on 13 February 2014 for consideration against the results of the consultation.
- 3.2 The Department of Health has given local authorities guidance when charging for non-residential services. The proposals meet the requirements of the Department of Health's Guidance "Fairer Contributions", last revised in June 2013.
- 3.3 The current charging policy was introduced in May 2003 and last amended in May 2009. It covers charging for home care, community support, supporting people services and day services. Charges for meals and transport are included as standard charges.

4 The Consultation Process and Findings

- 4.1 Details of the consultation exercise as set out in 6.6 (below) and summary of the response to consultation is attached as **Appendix 1**. The summary notes that from 1409 papers sent, 273 responses were received, a response rate of 19.37%. This would appear to be a low level of response given the significance of the proposals.
- 4.2 Looking at each of the responses, the main concern raised was the proposal to remove the maximum charge and to charge against the full cost of care. It is important to note that 45 other local authorities responded to the consultation. Of the 45 replies, 30 authorities already charge against the full cost of non-residential care and 15 operate a maximum charge.
- 4.3 The proposal to increase the transport charge for attendance at day services from the current £1.00 to £2.00 per day was thought to be reasonable considering the charge has not risen since its introduction.
- 4.4 The proposal to charge an administration fee of £475.00 for people wishing to enter into the Deferred Payment Scheme for persons in residential care, received mixed consultation results.

5. Other Options

Other options considered were varying the maximum charge between the current maximum of £295.00 and the full cost of the service provided and subsidising the charge for day care.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Although the consultation exercise showed that a number of people were opposed to the proposal to charge against the full cost of care, the proposal is in line with the majority of other local authorities. Furthermore if significant

changes were made to the proposals, then the resulting reduced level of income would result in reduced services.

6.2 Residents can be assured that additional costs due to disability will be taken into account within the assessment and that the charge will be fairly assessed. Also residents can request a visiting officer to call for assistance with completing the financial assessment form.

6.3 Anyone affected by the proposed changes will have the opportunity to ask for a reassessment.

7. Corporate Implications

7.1 Contribution to Council's Vision and Corporate Priorities.

The proposals support Corporate Priority 4, to maintain improved outcomes for vulnerable adults and older people.

7.2 Financial Implications.

The proposals contained in this report have the potential to generate a maximum additional income in the region of £150,000 in 2014/15, which will help to maintain current services and forms one of the Department of People's saving proposal's later on in this agenda (PE20). The proposal in this report also allows Members to consider the proposed changes to Fees and Charges, as part of that relevant report also on this agenda.

7.3 Legal Implications.

The proposals are in line with Department of Health Guidance on 'Fairer Contributions'. The report has been passed through Legal and Democratic Services.

7.4 People Implications.

None

7.5 Property Implications

None

7.6 Consultation

Consultation on the proposed changes to the charging policy took place from 11 November 2013 to 19 January 2014.

Letters were sent out or e-mailed to:

- All current service users of non-residential services
- All independent providers of services

- All organisations within Southend working with service users
- All Council members
- MPs

Everyone consulted with received an explanatory letter and a feedback form. The questions on the feedback form were identical for everyone. Copies are attached as **Appendix 2**.

A dedicated telephone comment line was available to give further information or to fill in an on-line form on behalf of the enquirer.

The form was available for completion on the Council's website.

The Media Office distributed a press release to all local media, newspapers and radio.

All Adult and Community Services staff were informed of the proposals in order to be able to advise and reassure service users.

7.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications.

All service users are financially assessed and charges are according to ability to pay. No one service group is treated differently to another.

Letters and feedback forms could be made available in Braille, large print and languages other than English.

A full Equality Analysis will be undertaken on the potential impact. Proposals to revise the charges users pay towards non-residential services are most likely to impact on older people with income and savings above Government specified thresholds. Revisions to transport costs will affect people of all ages attending day services.

7.8 Risk Assessment.

The budget proposals are subject to a Director's review of risk and robustness. Individual risk assessments will be undertaken should any significant changes or increases be agreed. The Council cannot withdraw a service solely due to the non-payment of any charges. In certain circumstances, the council will waive charges if a refusal to receive a service would place a service user at risk of significant harm.

7.9 Value for Money.

In order to deliver value for money it is essential that the Council achieves an appropriate balance between charging for services and funding services from Council tax.

7.10 Community Safety Implications.

None.

7.11 Environmental Impact

None

8. Background Papers

None

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of results of consultation.

Appendix 2 - Advisory letter, proposal sheet and feedback form.