

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Policy & Resources Committee

## Agenda Item 111

**Subject:** Life Events Fees & Charges Review for Registration Services  
Charges

**Date of meeting:** 19 January 2023

**Report of:** Executive Director, Health & Adult Social Care

**Contact Officer:** Name: Michelle Jenkins, Assistant Director, Resources  
Tel: 01273 29  
Email: michelle.jenkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for the financial year 2023/2042 for Registration Services within Life Events, in Health & Adult Social Care (HASC).

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee approves the fees and charges set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

Note: If the above recommendations are not agreed, or if the committee wishes to amend the recommendations, then the item will need to be referred to the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February to be dealt with as part of the overall budget. This is because the budget is being developed on the assumption that the fees and charges are agreed as recommended and any failure to agree, or a proposal to agree different fees and charges, will have an impact on the overall budget, which means it needs to be dealt with by the Policy & Resources Committee as per the requirements of the constitution. This will not stop the committee from making recommendations to P&R.

### 3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council adopted a Corporate Fees & Charges Policy in 2008. The main aims of the policy were to ensure that:
- Fees and charges are reviewed at least annually including consideration of potential new sources of income;
  - Fees and charges are set after comparing with 'statistical nearest neighbours' (or other relevant comparator groups) and taking into account market, legal and other contextual information;

- Unless set by a statute, fees and charges are set to recover full costs, including central overheads and capital financing, to ensure that services maximise potential for income generation from the services offered.
- Subsidies and concessions are not applied unless approved by members;
- The impact on financial inclusion is considered when setting fee levels.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

4.1 The majority of the fees set out in this paper relate to proposals for 2025/26. Fees and charges for 23/24 and 24/25 for most registration services have already been set and published at Policy and Resources Committee in 2022. The effect of the change to advance fee setting is in the region of an additional 14k for 2023/24. Thought is always given to service costs remaining competitive with near neighbour service providers where we have been able to obtain reliable information.

4.2 The Registration Service proposals aim to maximise the potential of Brighton & Hove's unique reputation as a city by the sea and fully embrace the scope of a modern Registration Service. Advance fee setting, as agreed last year, has helped to ensure our customers pay a realistic fee appropriate to the service when the ceremony takes place rather than the fee chargeable at the time the booking was made. All proposals acknowledge the local market in relation to business levels continuing to recover post pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, there was a drop in demand for notices of marriages and civil partnerships. Demand has now risen as restrictions have been lifted and the service continues to recover well, having also encountered pressures on provision of the statutory elements of the service, including birth and death registrations. Income levels for statutory certificates continue to be lower following government increases to certificate costs in 2019. This resulted in a large drop in the purchasing of birth and death certificates, at the time of a registration, and has not recovered.

4.3 Analysis does suggest there is an opportunity to increase certain non-statutory charges e.g. Private citizenship ceremonies, having reviewed latest benchmarking information held for neighbouring local authority registration service providers, whilst remaining competitive. These are also set out in Appendix 1.

4.4 All non – statutory fees and charges have been reviewed, and the proposals ensure we continue to maintain cost recovery and maximise income for the services offered. It is however, not within our power to increase statutory fees, where budget pressures have previously arisen.

4.5 Consultation with the General Register Office (GRO) has previously established there is not a legal obligation to consult with members of the public about non-statutory fees, as the Local Authority should have its own policies for fee setting against services it provides. Brighton & Hove City Council adopted a Charges and Fees setting policy in 2008.

4.6 Appendix 1 contains a table of the main registration fees and the proposals for 2025/26. At the bottom of the document there are proposals for increases to those non-statutory fees which are not part of the advance fee setting process so would increase for 2023/24.

## **5. Community engagement and consultation**

5.1 Registration Services continues to work with customers and community groups, including multi-faith groups. Engagement with the General Register Office, alongside benchmarking information from other service providers, enables these realistic proposals to be put before members

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 A full assessment of services provided, along with unit costings for every service and product, has ensured these proposals cover costs and are set realistically, and competitively. Attention is paid to charges made by other service providers, and where possible, comparisons are made on like for like services in the hope that customers are persuaded to choose the Brighton & Hove Registration service.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 Financial Implications:  
The fees and charges recommended in this report have been reviewed in line with the Corporate Fees & Charges Policy. A corporate inflation rate of 3% has been applied to income targets for fees and charges in 2023/24 and the fees and charges already set for 2023/24 are over and above that level. This report outlines the proposal for 2025/26 fees and charges and the expected level of income will be considered as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process and will be incorporated within future revenue budget reports.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Sophie Warburton*  
*15/12/2022*

*Date:*

## **8. Legal implications**

8.1 This report relates to non-statutory fees and charges. The proposed changes in discretionary fees comply with legal requirements and guidance, including where national legislation requires fees to be set on a cost recovery basis.

*Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert*

*Date: 201222*

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken. The screening has highlighted that no specific minority group is disproportionately affected by increases, with options being available for customers on low incomes.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 None have been identified.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

1. Fees schedule for Registration Service
- 2.