

Executive – 8 October 2009

PROPOSAL TO CHARGE FOR STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING SERVICES

Report of Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Purpose of the Report

The report proposes the introduction of charges for street naming and numbering services in order to cover existing costs. It is not possible to make a “profit”.

Financial Implications:

At the moment the service to facilitate a change of house name is provided free of charge. If a charge of £35.00 per property is levied, it is estimated that the Council could raise additional income amounting to £8,190.

Statutory Powers:

Section 65 Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, Sections 17 and 18 Public Health Act 1925; Section 93 Local Government Act 2003

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive **RECOMMEND** to Council that:-

- (1) from 1 April 2010, a charge of £35 per application be made for numbering or renumbering houses [and naming or renaming existing streets]; and
- (2) the policy statement set out in Appendix B to the report be adopted.

Background: (1) Legal powers

1. Under the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, the occupiers of houses and other buildings are obliged to mark their houses with a number approved by the local authority, at their own expense. Under section 17 of the Public Health Act 1925, a person proposing to name an unnamed street must give notice of it to the local authority, which has the right to object to the name. Under section 18 of that Act a street may be named, or the name of a street may be altered, by the local authority by order.
2. This Council passed a resolution on 18 March 1976 to apply the above provisions throughout the whole District of the South Hams.
3. Until 2003 this service had to be provided free of charge. However, under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 local authorities were given power to introduce charges for discretionary services where there was no other power to charge, provided that –

“taking one financial year with another, the income from charges
..... does not exceed the costs of provision” (S.93 (3)).

In other words, the Local Authority is not entitled to make money by charging for this service but it is entitled to cover its costs. The charging basis is the

same as that introduced in March 2009 for Local Land Charges searches and enquiries (Council minute 92/08; Executive minute E.117/08).

(2) Current Practice

4. Since 1974 this Authority has carried out a street naming and house numbering service without charge. In reviewing the current budgetary situation, a charge is now being considered.
5. There are four areas for which a charge could be made:
 - (a) changing the name of a house that has a name but no number;
 - (b) allocating a number to a house that presently has only a name;
 - (c) giving a name to an unnamed street or changing the name of a street;
 - (d) giving a name to a new street (i.e. a new development).

Plymouth City Council is the only Devon authority that currently charges for naming new streets. It has been suggested to officers that although lawful, it is not appropriate to charge for new developments as the customer has no way of registering an official postal address other than by coming through the local authority. In effect we have a monopoly and the customer has no choice but to pay a charge for a statutory function. It also imposes a small additional charge on development. House name changes or renaming a street are slightly different in that it's a personal choice to make the change.

6. In Devon, the North Devon, West Devon, Exeter City and Torbay Councils do not currently charge for this service but other local authorities charge as follows:-

Mid Devon	£30
Plymouth	£32
Teignbridge	£29
Torridge	£37
East Devon	£126

7. In the South Hams this work is mostly carried out by one member of the Local Land Charges team, practically full time as the main part of her job, with support from her manager. There is quite a lot of work associated with an application because changing a house or street name, and thereby one or more addresses, affects a large number of statutory bodies and utilities. Officers need to –

- research Planning and Building Control data, identifying anomalies;
- check which Parish the property is in;
- check whether it is a Listed Building or in the Dartmoor National Park;
- check and liaise with the Royal Mail who issue postcodes;
- produce plans to identify the property or properties affected;
- (for street naming) publish the proposals for consultation;
- make the order;
- distribute the data to all the relevant authorities (including South Hams departments); and
- update the Local Land and Property Gazetteer.

The actual amount of work varies case by case, depending largely upon the level of controversy. The proposal to introduce a charge averages out the work so that there is one simple fee.

Proposal

8. It is proposed that with effect from 1 April 2010 a charge of £35.00 be introduced to cover the costs involved for changes to house names. Appendix A shows how this was calculated. Based on the past few years it is anticipated that this would raise about £8,000 in a full year. This sum has been included as part of the Corporate Services savings for 2010/11. This proposal will be subject to consultation with town and parish councils. If approved, it could become the subject of an annual report to members, e.g. to Prosperity PDG when it considers Council charges for the forthcoming financial year.

9. It is suggested that the Council should also adopt the policy statement set out in Appendix B to direct the process which would be included on the Council's website and other publicity.

Risks	Opportunities	Benefits
insufficient enquiries to cover costs	to cover the costs of a service currently unfunded	To secure the provision of a statutory service paid for by the people who require it on a no-profit basis

Claire Benton
Land Charges Officer

Executive
 8 October 2009

Delyth Jenkins Evans
Monitoring Officer

Mark Seymour
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Background Documents:

Section 65 Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, Sections 17 and 18 Public Health Act 1925, Section 93 Local Government Act 2003

The "General Power of Best Value Authorities to Charge for Discretionary Services – Guidance on the Power in the Local Government Act 2003" (ODPM November 2003 at www.local.communities.gov.uk/guidprop.pdf)

Records kept by South Hams District Council Local Land Charges section

Local Council websites:

www.eastdevon.gov.uk	www.teignbridge.gov.uk
www.exeter.gov.uk	www.torbay.gov.uk
www.middevon.gov.uk	www.torridge.gov.uk
www.northdevon.gov.uk	www.westdevon.gov.uk
www.plymouth.gov.uk	

PROPOSAL TO CHARGE FOR STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING SERVICES: BREAKDOWN OF COSTS

The charge for changes to house names or street naming must not exceed the cost of providing the service. The cost of the service has been worked out by dividing the average number of applications by the cost of the officer time over the last two financial years, as shown below:

Table 1

	2007/08	2008/09
No. of House Name Changes	268	271
No. of New Developments	266	197
Total	534	468

Table 2

Time	2007/08	2008/09	
Hours charged (per timesheets)	701	1051	Average
Divide hours by number of properties	1.312734082	2.245726496	1.779230289

Table 3

**Hourly rates
(including on costs
– NI, premises etc)**

		Average	Unit cost	
Manager	£24.40		£20.02 x 1.779230289	Round down
SNN Officer	£15.63	£20.02	£35.61	£35.00

Table 4

Cases for house name changes only

2004/05	141	
2005/06	223	
2006/07	267	
2007/08	268	
2008/09	271	
Total	1170	Average 234

Income 234 x £35.00 = £8,190.00
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