

Cherwell District Council

Lead Member Decision - Lead Member for Planning

9 October 2020

Charging for Street Naming and Numbering - Proposal to Increase Unit Charge from £25 to £30

Report of Assistant Director – Planning and Development

This report is public

Purpose of report

Since early 2018 Cherwell has charged developers for allocating addresses to new properties and for administering postal address changes requested by existing property owners, typically when they wish to change their property name.

The purpose of this Report is to obtain the agreement of the Lead Member to increase our unit charge when doing this from £25 to £30.

Charging for this service is not yet incorporated into the Council's Scheme of Delegations. To amend the charge has therefore currently to be a Lead Member decision

1.0 Recommendations

The Lead Member is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve an increase in the unit charge from £25 to £30 per property.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Council adopted a scheme of charging for administering the addressing of new properties and the re-addressing of existing properties when requested in February 2018. The charge was set at £25 per address and remains so. Most Local Authorities charge for this service and when introduced Cherwell's charge of £25 was in the middle of the range of its cluster group of nearby authorities.
- 2.2 The Council delivers this service through powers that exist under section 13 of the Oxfordshire Act 1985. Being a discretionary service, Cherwell is able to recover its costs pursuant to section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2.3 A continuing aim of the Council is to maintain and improve its services matched by income streams that will enable it to do so. Therefore, a review of the unit charge has taken place.

- 2.4 The proposed charge of £30 per property would generate approximately £5,000 additional income over the course of a year (£2,500 over six months as factored into the mid-year budget review). Comparably, the new charge would still leave the Council's charge near the middle of the range of charges within the benchmark cluster group. There is no proposal to change the standard charge of £30 for responding to miscellaneous enquiries.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 When first introduced in early 2018 the Council set its entry level charge at £25 per unit. The income comes mainly from developers of new housing estates who rely on the Council to choose new street names, devise property numbering systems in accordance with BS 7666 and Royal Mail's protocols, and then liaise with Royal Mail who assign the postcodes. The service is predominantly clerical but requires significant administration, attention to detail and designated staff resource.
- 3.2 Although a discretionary service by the way in which the relevant legislation is worded, this is clearly an essential service which only Cherwell can perform. The powers do not exist with any other Authority covering the Cherwell area.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Charging for this service has not caused any controversy or objections in principle from the development industry. The principle of charging is now clearly accepted by developers. In the context of the cost of building a property the charge we make is very insignificant. Cherwell entered the market with a relatively low nominal charge. With the passage of time and increasing budgetary constraints a modest increase is recommended.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Councillor Colin Clarke, the Lead Member for Planning, has been given advance warning of this report.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The alternatives options are:

- To discontinue charging
- To reduce the existing charge
- To maintain the existing charge
- To increase the existing charge

Charging for this service has been in place and accepted as a principle for almost three years and the charge has not increased in that time. There is no reason to discontinue or reduce the unit charge. Maintaining the existing charge is also rejected as there has been no increase since it was introduced. Increasing to £30 will be non-controversial and is consistent with maintaining cost recovery. It will generate little or no reputational risk for the Council.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There will be no cost to the Council. The proposal will generate additional income of approximately £5,000 per year.

Comments checked by:

Karen Dickson, Strategic Business Partner
01295 221900, karen.dickson@cherwell-dc.gov.uk,

Legal Implications

- 7.2 The right to charge for this service is contained within section 18 of the Public Health Act 1925 (discretionary power to alter or assign a name to any street) and section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 (power to charge at 'cost recovery' for provision of discretionary services). The aim of the power is to enable Authorities to recover the costs of providing and improving services.

Comments checked by:

Richard Hawtin, Team Leader - Non-contentious
01295 221695, richard.hawtin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk,

Risk Implications

- 7.3 Consideration has been given to the reasonableness of the increased charge to the development industry assisted by benchmarking (para. 2.4 above).

Comments checked by:

Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes,
01295 221786, louise.tustian@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

7.4 Equalities Implications

The subject of this report are fees payable by developers and which constitute only a very minor element of eventual costs for residents. There are therefore no equalities implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Comments checked by

Robin Rogers, Head of Strategy Policy Communications & Insight. Mobile: 07789 923206
Email: robin.rogers@oxfordshire.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

N/A

Wards Affected

All Wards

Links to Joint Corporate Strategy and Policy Framework

Business Plan 2020/21 – Theme: Customers

- To deliver high quality, accessible and convenient services that are right first time

Document Information

Background papers

Lead Member Report for Planning 5 January 2018 “Charging for Street Naming and Numbering.

<http://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/documents/s37129/Charging%20for%20Street%20Naming%20and%20Numbering.pdf>

Report Author and contact details

Tony Brummell, Building Control Manager

01295 221909, tony.brummell@cherwell-dc.gov.uk