

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing PFH Meeting

21 April 2010

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director, Operational Services / Corporate Manager, Affordable Homes

UPDATE OF WATER AND SERVICE CHARGE INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL FOR WEEKLY PITCH FEES FROM 1 APRIL 2010 ON COUNCIL MANAGED TRAVELLERS SITES

Purpose

1. To update on the introduction of water and service charge for the District Council managed Traveller Sites and to put forward the proposed increases for pitch fees and water charges on both of the sites for the year 2010/2011.

Recommendations and Reasons

2. That the Housing Portfolio Holder agree that:
 - (a) The weekly pitch fee at Whaddon be increased to £49.50 for the small pitches and £74.25 for the large pitches
 - (b) The water charges on both Whaddon and Blackwell be increased to £5.20 per week

Background

3. The Council currently manages two County Council owned Traveller sites. For managing the sites SCDC receives a fee from the County Council. This is calculated by taking the sum of the total yearly income and expenditure; the Council then receives 8% of this total as its fee. Any profit or deficit at the end of the financial year is passed back to the County Council.
4. Previously, the water rates for both sites had been paid through the site accounts as a cost of running the sites. Last August a water charges was introduced at a rate of £4.87 per week.
5. The introduction of the water charges has been successful and there has been a 98.87% collection rate. It is proposed that the water charge for the coming year should be set at £5.20 based on the 2009/2010 actual water costs and to include a 15% administration fee.
6. Site pitch fees have not risen in the last five years and it was not considered last year due to the introduction of the water charges. With the rising cost of maintaining the sites however, it is essential to bring the pitch fees up to a level more representative of fees elsewhere across the County owned sites. Pitch fees at Blackwell are currently at this level, but Whaddon is substantially lower and therefore it is proposed to raise the Whaddon pitch fees only this year. Having taken into account the percentage increase for the past three years within Housing, it is proposed to increase the Whaddon pitch fees by 15%.

	Current pitch fee per week	Proposed pitch fee per week
New Farm, Whaddon	£43.00	£49.50 (small plots x 12) £74.25 (large plots x 2)
Blackwell, Milton	£57.50	£57.50

Considerations

7. To increase the water charge and increase the pitch fee at Whaddon would generate at full occupancy:

	No. of Charges per Week	Water/Service charges	Pitch fees
New Farm, Whaddon	12 @ £49.50	£3785.60	£38,610
	2 @ 74.25		
	14 @ £5.20		
Blackwell, Milton	15 @ £57.50	£4056.00	£44,850
	15 @ £5.20		
Total		£7,841.60	£81,460
Total Yearly Income		£89,301.60	

Options

8. To leave the pitch fees and water charges as they currently stand on both sites.
9. To increase the pitch fee on Whaddon, but leave as they are at Blackwell and to increase the water charges on both sites.
10. To increase the pitch fees on Whaddon, but leave the water charges at their current rate.
11. To increase the water charges only and leave the pitch fees at their current level on both sites.

Implications

12. Financial	Increasing the water charges will ensure that the cost of water continues to be borne by the site residents, as for others in the district. Increasing the pitch fees will ensure that Whaddon is brought into line with the other County owned site and the pitch fees cover sufficiently the cost of running and maintaining the site.
Legal	None
Staffing	None – both pitch fees and water charges are currently collected by the Travellers Officer

Risk Management	No additional risk management implications. Lone working and on site cash handling currently undertaken and has not proved to be problematic to date. Cash is not held on site overnight.
Equal Opportunities	In line with general and specific statutory duties under the Race relations Act 1976 and the Race relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Council operates a Race Equality Scheme (RES) in order to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote race equality and good race relations. The Scheme gives priority to actions relating to Travellers as the biggest ethnic minority (around 1.7%) in the district.
Climate Change	None

Consultations

13. We have consulted with the County Traveller Liaison Officer regarding the changes to pitch fees and water charges.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Quality, Accessible Services	Could improve quality of sites through raising additional funds for site improvements.
Village Life	None
Sustainability	Could help to sustain the future of the sites through additional maintenance.
Partnership	None

Conclusions / Summary

14. To increase the pitch fees for Whaddon and the Water Charges for both sites will provide additional income that is essential to ensure the sustainability of services and maintenance to the sites.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Water Charges 2009/2010 and Traveller Site Accounts

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