

COMMITTEE: CENTRAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
DATE: 19 SEPTEMBER 2011
TITLE: LICENSING FEES 2011-12
PURPOSE: FOR APPROVAL
AUTHOR: HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In accordance with the Council's regulations, it is a requirement for the Service to review its fees annually. It is a requirement that the Licensing Committee approve those fees which relate to the Council's licensing responsibilities.

In addition, it should be noted that the review of Public Protection Fees, including Licensing fees, contribute to the Council's £16 million savings programme. The intention to review the fees and to contribute towards the £16 million savings was approved on 10 December 2010. As the Head of Service, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader, they have been raised but your approval of this action is required.

2. LICENSING ACT 2003

- 2.1 These fees are included for information. These fees are statutory ones, and individual councils have no discretion to amend them. This may change over the next few months, with the Government reviewing the Act and suggesting that individual councils will have the right to amend the fees. This will be reported upon further once we have more information.

3. GAMBLING ACT 2005

- 3.1 As opposed to the Licensing Act, individual councils do have discretion to set their own fees, so long as they do not exceed the maximum set by the Government. When the Act came into force in 2007, the Council decided not to raise the maximum fee in all cases, but to follow the path of the other North Wales councils and set a fee, on the annual fees, of 80% of the maximum. In this report we recommend that we raise the fee to the maximum permitted on those who were not originally 100%. Other authorities are likely to follow a similar path

4. ACKNEY AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES

- 4.1 Traditionally the fees charged by this Council have been amongst the lowest in Wales. There is a wide variance in the fees set by different councils, even across North Wales.
- 4.2 You should note that the fees we are not setting are at the level which existed on average across North Wales in 2010-11.

5. SEX ESTABLISHMENTS

- 5.1 At present one establishment holds a Sex Establishment licence in Gwynedd, and we believe that the current fee is sufficiently high. There is no justification to raise it.

6. MARKETS AND FAIRS

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Council does not raise the fees in this area. It is an area where fees in adjoining counties have been lowered substantially and those counties continue to lose customers, and therefore income. Generally, it is good to be able to report that our markets in Gwynedd are successful with regard to the numbers attending but this is partly due to us lowering the fees charged some years ago. Evidence shows, in this area at least, that lowering the fee has succeeded in protecting the income for the Council and also maintain viable markets, which in turn helps protect the income for the future. Work is presently being carried out to try and strengthen the performance of the markets which are performing worst and thereby contributing to the viability of town centres.
- 6.2 With regard to fairs, the situation is somewhat different, with the income received by the Council falling. Our view is that to raise the fees would lead to a further fall in the income, on noting the precarious position of fairs in general. No increase in the fees is recommended here.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That the Committee approve the actions of the Head of Services to raise the fees for this service for 2011-12.