

Agenda Item No. 8

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Report to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

21st January 2003

Local Land Charges Search Fees

1. Summary Statement

- 1.1. Under Section 3 of the Local Land Charges Act 1975 the Council is required to maintain a local land charges register, in which are registered certain charges against land in the borough. Official searches of the register (usually by potential buyers or sellers of land and property) may be made under Section 9 of the Act, for which a fee is charged.
- 1.2. This report seeks approval with effect from 1st April 2003 to an increase of £10.00 in the basic Local Land Charges search fee.

Further details are attached for your information.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Local Land Charges Search Fees charged by the Council be increased by £10.00 for a basic search with effect from 1st April 2003.

In accordance with the authority delegated to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, the following course of action has been agreed, which will be set out in the formal record of the decisions taken by the Member:

- (1) the recommendation(s) above is/are approved.
- (2) the recommendation(s) above is/are approved as now amended.
- (3) the recommendations above are not approved.

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Date 21st January 2003

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Services

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Local Land Charges Search Fees

3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. Based on the average number of searches per annum over the last 10 years, the proposed increase in fees would yield an additional income of £75,000 in the next financial year.
- 3.2. This figure could, however, be reduced according to the number of searches carried out through the NLIS Hub referred to below.
- 3.3. The above forecasts are also dependent upon the continuing buoyancy of the housing market.

4. Policy Implications

Under Section 3 of the Local Land Charges Act 1975 the Council is required to maintain a local land charges register, in which are registered certain charges against land in the borough. Official searches of the register (usually by potential buyers or sellers of land and property) may be made under Section 9 of the Act, for which a fee is charged

5. Sustainability Implications

The Council is committed to the principles of sustainability and to developing a sustainable Sandwell. This report, however, has no detrimental implications to the policies.

6. Crime & Disorder Implications

The requirement to provide a local land charges register supports the Council's policies in relation to Crime and Disorder.

7. Implications for Young People

The proposals contained in this report will have no adverse effect on young people.

Local Land Charges Search Fees

8. Background Details

- 8.1. The fee currently charged for a basic search of residential premises is £95.00 and of non-residential premises £135.00. Charges made by other West Midlands metropolitan authorities are:-

Authority	Residential	Non-Residential
Birmingham	£132.00	£132.00
Coventry	£115.00	£115.00
Dudley	£80.00	£80.00
Solihull	£135.00	£160.00
Walsall	£118.50	£150.00
Wolverhampton	£77.00	£77.00

These figures do not include any increases planned for 2003/04.

- 8.2. In accordance with the Government's e-government agenda, the Council has taken steps towards achieving the provision of an electronic search facility. The Council has advanced to Level 2 of the National Land Information System (NLIS). This enables searchers to submit searches electronically through the NLIS Hub. For this facility the channel provider receives 6% of the fee and the Hub 12%, leaving 82% for the Council. During the period from January to November 2002 6% of searches were submitted in this way, although the figure is around 12% for the last two months of that period. We have an agreement that, at present, no more than 20% of searches will be dealt with electronically. If this figure were reached there would be a loss of income to the Council of £21,000.
- 8.3. All Councils will be expected to deliver a fully electronic land charges service by April 2005 and the current initiative puts the Council in a good position to achieve this.
- 8.4. There is a need to increase fees this year due to the NLIS project referred to above and changes to the Land Charges Search forms, which will lead to higher recharges from the Planning & Development Services and Highways Direct Divisions.

Source Documents

None