

# Implementation of new charging structure for Street Naming and Numbering (SNN) Service

## Summary

Warwick District Council has a statutory responsibility for the Street Naming and Numbering (SNN) service within its administrative area. This report seeks to implement an amendment to the current fee structure for the SNN Service, which will hopefully include the introduction of a scheme of charges for the discretionary services currently being offered free of charge.

## Recommendations

Members approve the adoption of a new scheme of charges taking into account the charging for all discretionary services offered.

Members consider maintaining the existing level of temporary resource currently set at 0.5 FTE.

## Background

Warwick District Council has a statutory responsibility for the SNN service within its designated administrative area, a function currently being managed by the GIS Team within ICT Services. This team took ownership of this area of work in July 2012 following a review of staffing responsibilities (see Minute No. 26, Employment Committee - January 2012).

The service helps to provide the definitive source of addressing information for use within the District. The Council has a statutory obligation to provide this service in accordance with Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847 (Sections 64 and 65) and the Public Health Act 1925 (sections 17-19).

Total confidence in the accuracy of property addressing has become more and more important, as used by organisations such as Royal Mail, Emergency Services and Utility providers. Furthermore, a growing reliance upon satellite navigation (SATNAV) products has meant an increasing dependence by industrial/commercial companies and the general public upon accurate locating and referencing of all types of properties, both domestic and commercial.

All new street and property names supplied need to be acceptable to the Local Authority, and therefore are subject to an extensive consultation process, primarily to avoid any duplication or confusion arising from the use of similar names in close proximity. Additionally, all names are expected to fit with statutory naming conventions, for example;

1. Street names cannot be duplicated within a postal town;
2. Street names should not be difficult to pronounce or awkward to spell;
3. Streets cannot be named after a living person;
4. Street names should wherever possible reflect the history or geography of the site; and
5. All numbers should be used in the proper sequence (excluding 13).

All addressing data is compiled in the Council's Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) and subsequently exported on a daily basis to the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG), both continually maintained and updated in accordance with the requirements of the national standard for addressing of streets and properties (BS7666:2006 Parts 1 and 2).

### **Street Naming and Numbering Charges**

The Power to charge falls under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003.

It should be made clear that the SNN Authority cannot charge for the street naming service (since the duty to provide this service is not discretionary). However, it can charge for elements of the SNN function (identified as discretionary services) in accordance with Section 64 and 65 of the 1847 Act coupled with Section 93 of the 2003 Act.

Discretionary services are those services that an authority has the power, but not a duty, to provide. An authority may charge where the person who receives the service has agreed to its provision and the charge must not exceed the cost of providing the service. With this in mind, an increasing number of authorities have introduced a scheme of charges to recover costs incurred for discretionary services that they had previously provided for free.

Currently, there is no statutory requirement for SNN Authorities to provide any of the administrative and consultative processes listed below;

Pre-application discussion with developers or applicants relating to all aspects of any forthcoming application;

1. Pre-application discussions with Town/Parish Councils to help formalise definitive list of street names;
2. Pre-application discussions with all affected rate payers and Town/Parish Councils in the case of changing an existing street name;
3. Checking that the relevant Planning and Building Control approvals have been obtained;
4. Undertaking consultation with other external organisations such as Royal Mail, Parish/Town/City Councils and the Emergency Services (as a non-statutory element of naming of streets);
5. Providing formal notification to external bodies and partners e.g. Utilities, Emergency Services, Royal Mail, National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG), Ordnance Survey and the Valuation Office;
6. Providing formal notification to internal departments e.g. Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), Council Tax (CTAX)/National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR), Waste Management, Housing Services and Electoral Registration.

### Prior to July 2012

Historically, the Council has received minimal income for the SNN service that it provides. In particular, the processes undertaken for the naming of new streets and properties are amongst those currently being provided free of charge (see table below).

<b>Service Provided</b>	<b>Charge</b>
Naming of New Streets	No charge
Numbering of New Properties	No charge
Revisions to a Development Layout	£58.00 per plot
Renaming/ Renumbering of an existing property	£58.00

This has also been a contributing factor in the shortfall in income for SNN in the year 2011/12. During this period, an estimated income of £15,000 was identified. However, only £6,603 was received – a shortfall of just under £8,400.

Furthermore, an average turnaround time of between three and four weeks has been provided, dependent upon the type of application.

### Since July 2012

Following a recent intervention in Neighbourhood Services, it was concluded that the GIS Team were able to provide a more efficient service, within their existing resources (1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 being the agreed date for the change). Indeed, they were seen as being better placed as they were responsible for the management of the LLPG, the council's definitive addressing database. Furthermore, they had closer links with a number of key internal departments e.g. Planning, Building Control, Housing Services, CTAX/NNDR and Register of Electors.

Upon taking on the service, a new Application Management Process was set up with the purpose of proactively identifying and processing new applications. In addition, the process of income collection was formalised and structured in such a way as to be more successful in obtaining outstanding fees.

To date, a total of £18,270 has already been identified for existing and new developments since July 2012 (using existing schedule for fees and charges). This already exceeds the initial revenue estimate for the whole of 2012/13 which was set at £16,700. This has now led to the estimate for the year 2012/13 being revised to £22,000.

In addition, turnaround times for applications have been improved, with average processing times now being less than 10 working days.

### Proposals for Improvements to SNN Service

Whilst it is generally agreed that the continuation of this level of service is admirable, the current economic climate and strict public sector finance constraints point to this being an idealistic expectation and not really achievable. Indeed, all matters relating to the generation of income, in this case by charging for the provision of discretionary services, need to be investigated.

In line with Council's Fit for the Future Strategy, there is a need to provide an increasingly streamlined service. Initial indications show that being managed in conjunction with the NLPG has already had a positive effect on the efficiency of the SNN service.

With this in mind, it is proposed that the service could be amended to include a new schedule of charges, most notably for developments that include both new streets and properties. The implementation of charges would cover the administrative and consultative processes previously identified. They would also be levied on a "not for profit" basis and only to cover the costs incurred by the Local Authority in providing the relevant functions. The benefits of such a change would include the following;

1. It would produce a greater on-going revenue stream and would offset the existing cost to the Council for providing the service;
2. Targeting new developments would allow for a possible reduction in the cost of more minor applications i.e. changes to house names; and
3. It would assist with the delivery of a more efficient service by reducing the likelihood of abortive works. Developers submitting applications for new housing would be more likely to carefully consider the financial implications of any revisions to existing schemes if they themselves were required to bear the initial application cost.

The proposed schedule of charges, due to be implemented as from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, has been based upon the average times taken to provide any discretionary services for a selection of applications received over the past four months (see Appendix A). To obtain a figure for the costs incurred, the average figure has been multiplied by the direct administrative costs for the staff expected to perform the work (currently £14.06 per hour).

The effects of the amended fee structure upon the income received from existing applications received over the past four months would have been minimal, namely £21,030 as opposed to £18,444. However, with the expected rise in new domestic properties being built (between 500 and 600 new houses per year), there is every expectation that the income received from the Street Naming and Numbering could more than double.

Proposed schedule to be implemented by this authority;

<b>Function</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Change in Fee</b>
Naming of a New Street	£110.00	New charge
New dwelling/unit(s) following demolition/conversion	£60.00 per Plot (previously £58.00)	Increase by £2.00
Numbering of New Development: 1 to 10 Plots 11+ Plots	£110.00 £110.00 plus £15.00 per Plot	New charge New charge
Re Name/Number of an existing property	£30.00 (previously £58)	Reduce by £28.00

Amend a Development Layout	£60.00 per Plot affected (previously £58.00)	Increase by £2.00
Add a name to existing numbered property	NIL (previously £58.00)	Removal of charge
Additional copies of "Confirmation of Address" letters	£25.00	New charge
Renaming of a Street	Price upon request	New charge

The suggested fees are similar to those levied by Nuneaton and Bedworth BC and North Warwickshire DC. Rugby BC currently only charges for conversions and renaming and renumbering, whilst Stratford DC have never implemented charges for any aspect of the service (as detailed in Appendix B).

### **Implications**

Financial - Significant financial implications as revenue will provide cost recovery of discretionary service & help fund.

Staffing - No increase in staffing. Expected revenue increase will be able to further justify the retaining of current Data Capture Assistant post (currently due to expire June 2013).

Equalities and Diversity - There are no direct equality and diversity implications.

Environmental - The fees are modest and on a "not for profit" basis making the risk of alienating residents or businesses small. Similar charges are increasingly being implemented by an increasing number of Local Authorities across the country.

Community Safety - There are no direct community safety implications.

**Appendix E3 (1) – Discretionary Services & Approximate Average Times Taken**

<b>Applications for New Road Creation</b>	<b>Approx. Time Taken</b>
Leighfield Road, Warwick University - Change of addresses following change of name of access road (12.0020.R)	13:10:00
New Spine Road – South West Warwick (12/0010/W)	4:30:00
Tournament Fields, Warwick – Request for new road name (12/0008/W)	11:15:00
<b>Total Hours (currently)</b>	<b>28:55:00</b>
<b>Average Time per Application</b>	<b>9:52:00</b>

<b>Applications for New Properties</b>	<b>Approx. Time Taken</b>
Former Leamington College - 58 new dwellings & 2 new (R.3.01.447)	14:30:00
Avon Court Residential Home, All Saints Road, Warwick - 42 new dwellings at (12.0001.W)	13:35:00
Warwick University, Coventry - 6 new student blocks (12.0015.R)	11:45:00
Vine Mews, Warwick - New housing development (12/0024/W)	4:30:00
Charter Approach, Warwick – New housing development (12/0025/W)	3:00:00
<b>Total hours (currently)</b>	<b>47:20:00</b>
<b>Average hours taken</b>	<b>9:30:00</b>

**Appendix E3 (2)– Local Councils operating similar charging for discretionary services;**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Nuneaton &amp; Bedworth BC</b>	<b>North Warwickshire BC</b>
Naming of New Streets	£115.50	£106.00
Numbering of New Properties:		
Up to 10 Plots	£115.50	£106.00
11+ Properties – per number	£11.50 per plot	£13.00 per plot
Renaming of a Street	£341.00	Price upon request
House naming/renaming	£56.50	£53.00
Amend a Development Layout	-	£26.50 per plot
Commercial Property (per unit)	-	£26.50
Add a Property Name	-	£53.00
Correct an Address Anomaly	-	£26.50

**Coventry CC**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Changing the number of an existing property	£50.00
New dwelling/unit in existing road	£50.00
Confirmation of address to solicitors/conveyancers/occupiers or owners	£25.00
New Developments: Per Plot (House/Unit/Flat)	£25.00
Subdivision of House/Units	£75.00
Re numbering of scheme following development replan (after notification of numbers)	£100 plus £10 per plot

**Hinckley & Bosworth BC**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Naming of New Streets	£150.00
Re Name/Number of an existing property	£40.00
Naming/ Numbering of New Development:	
1 – 5 Plots	£40.00 each
More than 5 Plots	£20.00 each additional
Change to a development after notification	£50.00 admin fee plus £15 per plot
Street re-naming at residents request	£250.00 plus all compensation met by applicant with a two thirds

	majority agreement from residents.
Written Confirmation of postal address details	£25.00
Numbering of new flat complex	£25.00 per flat

In addition, initial investigations indicate that the following Local Authorities also operate a charging structure for discretionary services;

Ashfield District Council  
 Bath & North East Somerset Council  
 Birmingham CC  
 Brent Council  
 Bromsgrove District Council  
 Cardiff City Council  
 Chorley Borough Council  
 Durham City Council  
 East Cambridgeshire District Council  
 Eastbourne Borough Council  
 London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
 Mendip District Council  
 Sevenoaks  
 Stafford Borough Council  
 Stroud Borough Council  
 Swale Borough Council  
 Torridge District Council  
 Teignbridge District Council  
 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
 Uttlesford District Council  
 Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council  
 West Oxfordshire District Council  
 Winchester City Council

For further information about this report, please contact Mark Barnes, GIS Manager (456510).