

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 18 AUGUST 2015**

**REMOVAL OF LIBRARY OVERDUE CHARGES**

**REPORT BY (INTERIM) HEAD OF SERVICES TO COMMUNITIES**

**ABSTRACT**

This report brings forward a proposal for removing charges levied by the Council for the late return of library stock.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees to:

- (i) the removal of charges for the late return of library stock

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit
- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
- Adults maximise their potential through learning opportunities
- We have improved the health and wellbeing of our people and inequalities are reduced

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Overdue charges are traditionally levied to encourage the return of library stock on time for use by others in the community.

3.2 Although there is no evidence to suggest that overdue charges do encourage timely return, there is some evidence that a significant increase in overdue charges had an impact on reducing the number of late returns.

<b>ANGUS</b>	<b>% of returns that were late</b>
Overdue Charges - December 2010 5p per day and 1p per day (unwaged) Upper limit £2.10 per item and 42p per item (unwaged)	22%
Overdue Charges - December 2011 20p per day and 10p per day (unwaged) Upper limit £11 per item	12%

3.3 The Library Fine Amnesty in Angus during March 2014 provides evidence that overdue charges can also discourage the return of library stock and block future library use.

This Amnesty was successful in both encouraging the return of overdue items and attracting lapsed users who owed overdue charges.

**Total number of overdue charges waived - £5,258.50**

**Total number of borrowers with overdue charges waived - 624 people**

**Total number of overdue items returned - 3,172 items**

**Total value of overdue items returned (@ £7.70 each) - £24,424.40**

- 3.4 Staff report that overdue charges block library use when members return all overdue stock but owe greater than that stock's value in overdue charges; customers cannot or will not pay the outstanding overdue charges and do not return to library use.
- 3.5 With the demise of high street video shops and the rise of download-to-view services, the concept of "late return fees" is old-fashioned. Library fines promote to our communities a traditional view of the library as an out-of-date and unfriendly place.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 Library overdue charges in Angus were increased by 400% in April 2011 and set at:
- 20p per day per item and 10p per day per item for junior members (under 16) and unwaged
- 4.2 Overdue charges begin to accrue immediately an item becomes overdue.
- 4.3 Overdue charges are capped at £11 per item.
- 4.4 The 2014/2015 income target for overdue charges was £15,400. The actual income received in 2014/2015 was £18,127. The 2015/2016 income target has been set at £18,100.

#### **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 This report recommends the removal of charges for the late return of library stock for all library members.
- (i) Accounts for long overdue items would be raised from the due date, with a flat non-refundable charge of £8.50 per account to cover administrative costs. At this time, further borrowing would be temporarily suspended until outstanding stock is returned.
  - (ii) Charges for lost or damaged library items and non-returned stock would continue to be imposed and collected.
  - (iii) The removal of charges would be implemented at the change to a new library management system scheduled for late November 2015.
  - (iv) All overdue charges outstanding at the time of implementation would be cancelled.
- 5.2 This proposal has the following benefits for Angus:
- (i) Enables all children to access material for learning and for reading for enjoyment, increasing opportunities for improved attainment;
  - (ii) Provides equality of access to material to improve literacy;
  - (iii) Provides equality of access to material for health and patient self-management e.g. the Take Control cancer collection, Chronic Pain collection and forthcoming Dementia Support materials;
  - (iv) Enables all adults to access material for learning and reading for enjoyment, increasing opportunities for improved quality of life;
  - (v) Matches the up-to-date policies for borrowing of electronic stock (e-books, e-magazines and e-audiobooks) for which overdue charges are not incurred;

- (vi) Is compatible with self-service issue and return systems proposed for integrated ACCESS-Library facilities;
- (vii) Provides potential to reduce the number of non-returned items;
- (viii) Reduces challenging customer-staff interactions;
- (ix) Potential to increase performance against Key Performance Indicators CS2CC-010 Number of library borrowers and CS2CC-011 Borrowers as a % of the resident population;
- (x) Is a positive response to the information and digital age;
- (xi) Works towards progression of five of the six strategic aims from the recently published 'Ambition & Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020' to promote reading literacy and learning, economic wellbeing, social wellbeing, culture and creativity and libraries as excellent public services.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The removal of overdue charges will require the impact on the 2015/16 income target (set at £18,100) in the revenue budget to be met from other sources for this financial year. The full target will also require to be removed for future years, with the impact of this required to be contained within the Services to Communities overall revenue budget position.
- 6.2 Angus ALIVE may absorb the estimated pro-rata costs of approximately £6,033 (4 months, from December 2015 to March 2016) within the current year revenue budget and the risk is that the Trust do not agree to these proposals.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Risks**

This proposal has the following risk:

- (i) The incidence of late return will increase, making stock unavailable for others

The new library management system will provide new opportunities to mitigate this risk e.g. automated email pre-overdue reminders for members, automated email overdue reminders and the potential to introduce a demerit points system leading to temporary suspension.

This incidence of late return will be monitored and actions to discourage late return explored and implemented if required.

No increased risk of stock theft is identified as those who borrow with no intention of returning stock are not concerned about overdue charges.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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