

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 8

meeting date: THURSDAY, 26 MAY 2016
title: CHARGING FOR IMMIGRATION INSPECTIONS
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE – MARSHAL SCOTT
principal author: HEATHER COAR – HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider and approve the introduction of new charges for immigration inspections.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To help make people's lives safer and healthier and to support health, environmental, economic and social wellbeing of people who live, work and visit the Ribble Valley.
- Corporate Priorities – To enable the delivery of effective and efficient services.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Environmental Health Section carried out 4 inspections of houses for immigration purposes last year. This financial year no inspections have been carried out so far.

2.2 Immigration inspections are a discretionary service. The requests for the service have tended to increase year on year creating demand on officers' time. It is therefore proposed that a charge for this service be introduced to cover this time.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Immigration inspections are carried out on behalf of residents of Ribble Valley applying for family members to come and live with them from abroad. The inspection is required to confirm that the property will not be overcrowded with the additional resident(s) and that the property is in a condition fit to live in. This is a discretionary service, which the Council could choose not to deliver.

3.2 The immigration report is required by the High Commission as part of the immigration application from the country from which the individual is travelling. It is an integral and necessary part of the immigration application.

3.3 Whilst an average of 4 inspections per year is low the requests for service can occur at any time. This is a considerable time commitment for the Environmental Health Officer who undertakes this service. At the present time there is no charge made for the service even though it is discretionary.

3.4 Other Councils, such as Watford Council, Preston Borough Council and Pendle Borough Council charge for immigration inspections, whilst others either do not provide the service at all eg Leeds City Council, or do not charge.

3.5 It is recommended that a minimum charge should be set at £114, which will generally cover the officer's time in inspecting and preparing the report but for more complicated cases the charge be applied at the rate of £38 per hour.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – There are financial implications for the Environmental Health team at the present time. If charging were to be introduced then on last year's inspection figures, the team could raise £450 in fees, which would help cover costs in other areas of the service. The proposed changes would have no effect on staffing levels.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – There are no particular technical, environmental and legal implications.
- Political/Reputation – The report represents the Borough Council taking appropriate action to secure income to a well-used and front line service.
- Equality & Diversity – To ensure the suitability of accommodation ie suitable, safe and not over crowded where a person lives or stays whilst in the UK.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Approve the request for immigration inspections to be charged at a minimum rate of £114 commencing forthwith.

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HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Heather Coar, extension 3214

REF: HC/EL/HEALTH & HOUSING/26 MAY 2016