

Equality Impact Assessment



Hampshire
County Council

Changes to Library Service charges effective from June 2021

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Department: Culture, Communities and Business
Services

Date of
assessment: 17/05/2021

Description of current service/policy

Membership of the Hampshire Libraries is free to join, borrow books and use computers or public Wi-Fi. Online resources including eBooks, eAudiobooks, online newspapers and magazines are also free to use. Charges apply to reservations and requests, hiring of audiobooks and replacement costs for lost or damaged items. Fines levied for the late return of items can be avoided but in addition special rates apply to under 18s and concessions ensure that everyone can access services. The policy will be reviewed every three years with the level of fines and charges reviewed annually, any changes will be communicated to customers in advance of implementation.

Geographical impact: All
Hampshire

Description of proposed change

The proposed changes from June 2021 affect all customers and apply specifically to the following library services:

- Maximum accrued overdue charges
- Membership and charges for accessing particular services
- Performance sets hired by Music and Choral Groups that reside outside of Hampshire
- Replacement charge for lost library cards

The increase in library charges was identified using a comparison with the rates charged by other library services but also an exercise to identify the full costs involved to deliver these specific services including staff time, transportation, postage, etc. In addition, the annual price inflation have informed the price increases.

Impacts of the proposed change

This impact assessment covers Service users

Engagement and consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? No

This is the annual review of fines and charges by the Library Service.

Statutory considerations	Impact	Mitigation
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<p>Age: Low</p>	<p>The proportion of Hampshire library customers aged 60 and over is 32% and compares with 26% for the Hampshire population. The proportion of children (0-17) is 27% for all Hampshire library customers and 21% for the population of Hampshire. Broadly speaking there is good representation of all age ranges and therefore the impact on the adults is spread across the customer profile. Levying fines for the late return of items encourages customers to bring back books on time, making copies available for others to borrow and increasing accessibility to stock. Customers are encouraged to receive emails reminding them of return dates and allowing them to avoid charges. Alternatively, customers can choose to borrow eBook formats where there are no fines and charges applied eg eAudio books.</p> <p>Book loans returned or renewed on time are free. Renewals can be done in the branch or for those that are unable to visit the branch over the phone or via the internet. The library service aims to support young people under 18 years old and disabled adults with reduced overdue charges.</p> <p>The Home Library Service is available to customers who are unable to visit a branch regularly and are not charged fines or fees. Therefore, current and future Home Library Service customers will not be impacted by the increase in fines and charges.</p>	
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<p>Disability: Low</p>	<p>It is not possible to extract data about the disabilities of library customers but, due to the availability of concessions, it is assessed that the impact of the changes to fines and charges is low. Concessions apply for those receiving disability living allowance, personal independence payment or with verification of a long-standing disability. Supporting evidence might be a Gateway card, Disability card or letter from a GP, optician, etc. Customers are encouraged to receive emails reminding them of return dates and allowing them to avoid fines and charges.</p> <p>The small increase in the charge for the loan of audiobooks (increase of 50p per loan) reflects the fact that these popular items are expensive to purchase. There is also an increase to the annual audiobook membership (from £20 to £30 per annum) but this membership still remains a cost-effective way of accessing physical books in this format and the option to use the eAudio Book service for free still remains through BorrowBox.</p> <p>Loans returned or renewed on time are free. Renewals can be done in the branch or for those that are unable to visit the branch over the phone or via the internet.</p> <p>Customers who are unable to use standard print books can access a membership which allows them to borrow audio books free of charge, when they show supporting evidence.</p>	
<p>Sexual orientation: Neutral</p>		

Race: Neutral		
Religion and belief: Neutral		
Gender reassignment: Neutral		
Gender: Neutral		
Marriage and civil partnership: Neutral		
Pregnancy and maternity: Neutral		
Other policy considerations	Impact	Mitigation

Poverty:

Low

Loans returned or renewed on time are free. Renewals can be done in the branch or for those that are unable to visit the branch over the phone or via the internet. Customers are encouraged to receive emails reminding them of return dates and allowing them to avoid charges. Alternatively, customers can choose to borrow eBook formats where there are no charges applied eg eAudio books.

The library service aims to support young people under the age of 18 years with reduced overdue charges incurred. Concessions are available for customers receiving disability living allowance, personal independence payment or with verification of a long-standing disability. Supporting evidence might be a Gateway card, Disability card or letter from a GP, optician, etc.

Hampshire Libraries issue books for 4 weeks, longer than many other authorities and most of the stock can be renewed up to 5 times.

The maximum Adult membership accrued fees per item will increase from £6.75 to £7.00 and the maximum Child membership accrued fees per item will increase from £1.25 to £1.50.

<p>Rurality: Low</p>	<p>Loans returned or renewed on time are free. Renewals can be done in the branch or for those that are unable to visit the branch over the phone or via the internet. Customers are encouraged to receive emails reminding them of return dates and allowing them to avoid charges. Customers can choose to borrow eBook formats where there are no fines and charges applied eg eAudiobooks. Online formats require internet access to download prior to the first use but can then be accessed without an internet connection. There are some areas of the county where poor connectivity and slow internet speeds can make it more challenging to use the digital service.</p> <p>Many branches have drop boxes allowing customers to return items to the library when it is closed.</p>	
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Neutrality statement (if all considerations have a neutral impact)

Any other information

Book loans returned or renewed on time are free. The library service aims to support people with a variety of concessions for adults with disabilities and young people under the age of 18 years. Home Library Service customers are not charged fees because they rely on volunteers.

Hampshire Libraries issue books for 4 weeks, longer than many other authorities and most of the stock can be renewed up to 5 times.

List of Services together with their fees and charges

Hire, Reservation & Renewal

The adult reservation fee will remain at £1.00 per item and the under 18s reservation fee will remain £0.10 per item.

The adult late fee will remain at £0.25 per item and the under 18s late fee will remain £0.05 per item.

The maximum charges that can be accrued before no further items can be borrowed will increase

from £6.75 to £7.00 for an adult and from £1.25 to £1.50 for customers under 18 years old.

The hire of audio books will increase from £1.50 to £2.00 per item.

Membership Cards

Membership of Hampshire Libraries remains free and when a customer joins, they are provided with a plastic membership card if required. The replacement of an existing members library card will increase from £1 to £2. A customer can also download the Spydus app which allows them to issue books without the need for a card. The price increase is to help transition customers away from the need to have a physical card and help offset the cost of purchasing the plastic cards, which also fulfils part of our green agenda.

Group Memberships

The full cost of these Performance arts services is not met by an individual but by a group of usually more than 10 orchestral or choral members so it is anticipated that the price increases can be managed by the various groups who appreciate the high standard of service provided. Some groups will charge audiences to attend their performance and have the ability to share the performance set hire with an even wider group of people than the music group members. The increase in charge is for groups that reside outside of Hampshire as the cost of providing this service exceeds the income received so it remains subsidised for Hampshire residents.

Hampshire Libraries have over 1,100 reading group sets of 10 copies of the same books, where available including a copy in a different format such as spoken word or large print. These sets are bookable twelve months in advance and are delivered to the nearest branch to the group for collection and include a broad range of genres from classics to crime. These sets are only available to reading groups and are not available for standard loan. The system for managing this service is staff intensive and Hampshire has one of the largest selection of sets in the Country. Hampshire Libraries remains committed to supporting this service as it allows 500 groups to read a book as part of a group, which supports literacy and social interaction.

A full breakdown of the fees and charges in can be found at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/librariesandarchives/library/membership/fees-and-charges>.

The income from all library fines and charges is used to support the delivery of library services. Library charges will be reviewed again in February 2022.