

## **Agenda Item 9**

The Town Council agreed to re-introduced fines for overdue books and continue charges for photocopying from September 2021. There is a noticeable decline in overdue charges from this period due to people understanding they can now go online (CC Libraries website) and re-new their books before a fine is applied to their accounts. This is probably born from the lockdown/click and collect period where people became online dependent and CC library webpage computer literate.

This is happening across all UK libraries and the following email from Paul Evered, CC Library Resources Team Leader, serves to give Cornwall Councils direction moving forward on charges.

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This e-mail serves to record and ratify the Cornwall Library Service recommendation to abolish overdue fines in Cornwall Council run Library sites. I am sending to you for approval.

Overdue fines are being abolished in libraries across the world (including all libraries in Ireland, and many across Scotland, Wales and England) with increasing regularity. This is being done for the same basic reasons, the main ones being:

- It is the role of the library to provide free access to books and information to all regardless of an individual's means. Fines provide a barrier to the service which disproportionately hurt low-income borrowers. For many the cost, or even just the threat, of overdue fines becomes a big enough barrier to stop them engaging with the service at all.
- There are no overdues on e-book lending. This creates an inconsistent service and an uneven playing field for those who cannot access digital services.
- They create a stressful work environment for staff and damage the library brand.
- Rather than encouraging timely returns, late fees can stop borrowers returning books at all, choosing instead to keep hold of the books and never return to the library.
- Overdue fees represent relatively small pots of money. With the majority of branches, it costs more to collect than the fees the total of the fees themselves. Collectively, for the five Cornwall Council sites, it costs approx. £12,500 to collect £10,000 of charges

These reasons led me to the recommendation that we stop charging library overdues. I have written a report outlining more fully this recommendation. It was endorsed by The Senior Leadership Team on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> of September. On this date the recommendation was also supported by our portfolio holder, Carol Mould.

Some of our Partner libraries have also expressed a wish to abolish charges and the aspiration has to be a full sign up, and consistency of service across the board. This would provide a fantastic platform for positive publicity and a 'relaunch' of libraries across the County. I will wait to hear back from all of our partners before looking at a timeline to implement these changes.

**Paul Evered | Library Resources Team Leader**  
**Communities and Public Protection**  
**Neighbourhoods | Cornwall Council**

To give Town and Parish Councils time to build new revenue opportunities Cornwall Council are providing a two year tapering revenue stream to help subsidise the initial loss of (decreasing) fine charges.

For year 1 the Town Council would receive a 50% subsidy of 2019/2020 figures and for year 2 the Town Council would receive a 25% subsidy of 2019/2020 figures.

Based on this a £600 and £300 yearly subsidy respectively would probably eclipse the diminishing 'fines' return the Town Council expect.

This would give the Town Council suitable time to build in new commercial streams such as teas & coffees, merchandising sales, continued photocopying charges etc

There is also the negative 'publicity' angle to this. Why is Saltash Town Council continuing with this when all the others have dropped fines? (This seems to be the common feedback from the CC partners meeting).

The positive outlook for Saltash is that the Town Council is doing this for the town and can build on this.

### **Options:**

Taking the above into account, does the Town Council:

1. wish to drop overdue book fines commencing January 2021?
2. review new income avenues?

**END OF REPORT**