
INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES FOR STREET NAMING, HOUSE NUMBERING, AND CHANGING A HOUSE NAME

Report by Service Director, Customer and Communities

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

21 November 2017

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report proposes the introduction of charging for requests for street naming, property numbering or naming, and property name changing (renaming), in line with many other Scottish Local Authorities.**
- 1.2 Under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, SBC currently undertakes the processes required to name a new street, number or rename a property but does this at no cost to the developer, be that an individual, a commercial organisation or a social landlord.
- 1.3 Almost half of Scottish Local Authorities have introduced charges for these services. Given current public sector financial constraints and the duty, under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, to secure best value, SBC has the right to introduce charging and cover the costs required to provide the service.
- 1.4 With the ongoing tightening of public finances and anticipated increases in house building, it is proposed that fees are introduced for those who make a request to SBC to name a street, number or rename a house, and that a more streamlined process is introduced to allow the collection of the information required to instigate and undertaken the process.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee:-**
 - (a) **Agrees to the introduction of charges to householders, developers and Registered Social Landlords (or any other individual or body who required this service) to cover costs associated with requests to name a street, number, name or rename a property and the introduction of an e-form for this purpose;**
 - (b) **Considers the the scale and type of development in Scottish Borders, and agrees to set the following charging rates, for all requests made after 1 December 2017:**
 - **Street Naming: £150 per street named**
 - **Property Numbering or Naming: £75 per property**
 - **Property Renaming: £75 per property**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the budget setting process for 2017/18 it was proposed that SBC looked to introduce a fee for requests for naming of streets and the numbering of properties. Within the Financial Plan, £22k was included as annual income, under Place "Maximising Resources".
- 3.2 The Council's power to name and number the roads in its area stems from section 97 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 which states that "a local authority may, in relation to any road in their area, give such name to it as they think fit and give each of the premises in it such distinguishing number as they think fit; alter that number when necessary; and require the owner of each of the premises, by notice served on him, to affix or paint that number on his premises so that it is readily legible from the nearest part of the public place giving access to the premises".
- 3.3 Currently, SBC's Democratic Services undertake, at no cost to individuals, developers or social landlords, the work required to name a new street, number either one or multiple properties, and rename properties. This work is carried out at clerical assistant level and takes around 2/3 of an FTE. Were this to grow to utilise a full FTE, the cost of this would likely be in the £19k-£21k range at current salary, NI rates etc. It is noted that Audit Scotland has provided guidance on the matter and the general principle is that a local authority should only be charging as much as it costs to carry out the service.
- 3.4 Around half of Scottish Local Authorities have now introduced charging for these processes. Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 states that it is the duty of the local authority to make arrangements which secure best value. It stipulates that in providing best value, the local authority shall "maintain a balance between the quality of the performance of its functions, the cost to the authority of that performance and the cost to persons of any service provided by the local authority on a wholly or partly rechargeable basis".
- 3.5 With tightening public sector resources, other local authorities are now charging for these services in order that the time spent by support services is, at the very least, covered by either individuals or developers and that this income can then be re-invested in universal public sector services associated with additional development.
- 3.6 The adopted Local Development Plan 2016 (prepared by SBC's Planning service) has identified opportunities for 12,506 housing units for future development, up to the period 2025 across the Scottish Borders. This includes land incorporated within allocated sites, as well as estimates for development opportunities on non-allocated or "windfall" sites.
- 3.7 It is anticipated that housebuilding for the period 2016/17 and beyond is likely to increase, partly due to the number of affordable housing proposals being developed as part of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2018-23, approved at SBC's Executive Committee on 17 October 2017. The current approved SHIP estimates the following affordable housing completions:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
83	282	319	222	211

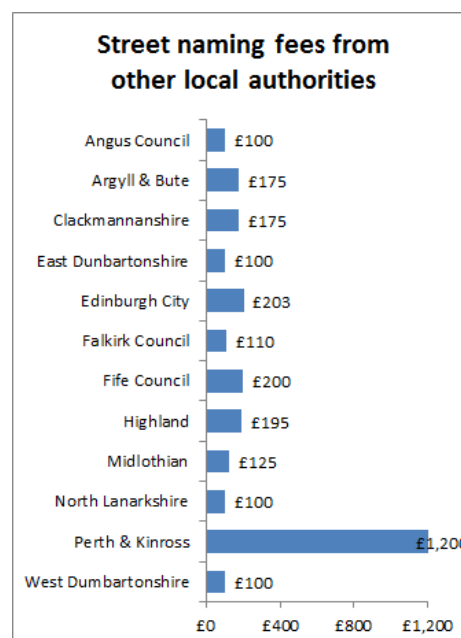
3.8 Whilst the delivery of housing is subject to many factors out with SBC's control, it is reasonable to anticipate that there will be a significant number of developments in the future requiring Council input with regards to street naming, and property numbering.

4 STREET NAMING

4.1 After planning permission is granted, developers or Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) make contact with SBC's Democratic Services in order that the processes required for street naming can commence. Democratic Services then instigate a consultation process with Elected Members, Community Councils, and relevant SBC service areas such as Roads. Royal Mail is then contacted and a postcode is issued. Democratic Services then notify the applicant, Emergency Services, NHS and utility providers.

4.2 12 other Scottish Local Authorities currently charge between £100 and £1200 for street naming. The table below shows how much each Local Authority charges and the graph clearly demonstrates the range of charges:

Councils	Street naming fees
Angus Council	£100
Argyll & Bute	£175
Clackmannanshire	£175
East Dunbartonshire	£100
Edinburgh City	£203
Falkirk Council	£110
Fife Council	£200
Highland	£195
Midlothian	£125
North Lanarkshire	£100
Perth & Kinross	£1,200
West Dunbartonshire	£100



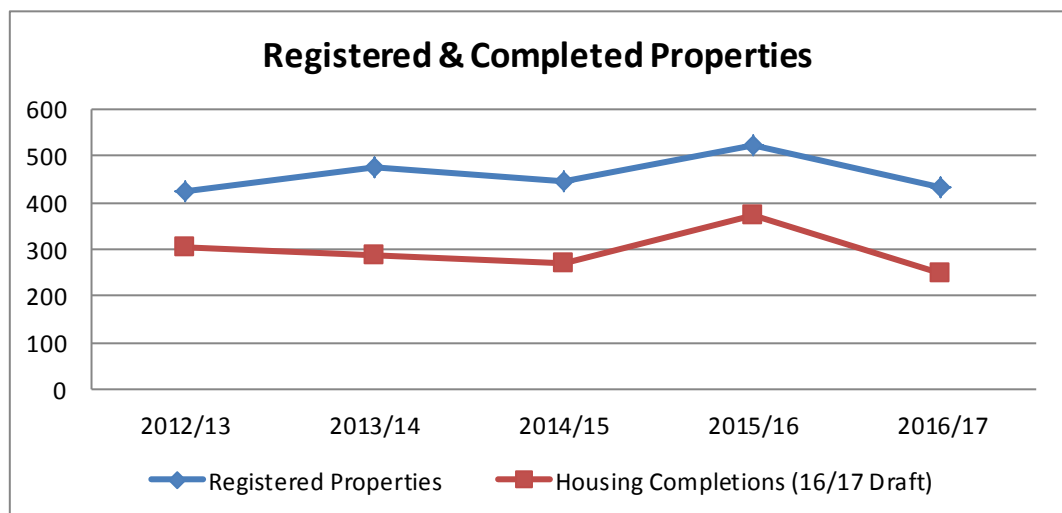
4.3 Over the last few years, SBC has dealt with the naming of around 20 streets each year. The table below shows the developments where street naming was required. Each street naming consultation process usually takes a few months.

Developments	2014	2015	2016	2017 to 30/6/17
Berwickshire	4	2	5	2
Ettrick & Lauderdale	8	7	4	5
Roxburghshire	9	5	7	2
Tweeddale	0	5	7	4
TOTAL	21	19	23	13

- 4.4 Once the street or streets have been named, the developer or RSL is responsible for providing and installing signage. SBC's Sign Shop and Roads Service will often be involved but all costs are covered by the developer or RSL.
- 4.5 Occasionally, bodies such as town groups or archaeological societies undertake work to re-instate or change the name of a lane or close within a town or village. Requests for street naming such as this are dealt with in the same way as requests from developers and RSLs, and the body making the request is responsible for signage and erection costs, although SBC may be involved in seeking or providing fund through, for example, the Small Schemes budget. Requests such as this would also be subject to the proposed administration charges but SBC would work with the applicant to identify appropriate grants or funding that could be used to cover total project costs.

5 PROPERTY NUMBERING

- 5.1 Within SBC's Assessors Service, between 400 and 500 properties are registered for council tax each year. Housing completion figures tend to be lower and the differences can in part be attributed to, for example, Property Conversions and also Self-Catering properties re-joining the council tax register:



- 5.2 Each year, SBC's Planning Service makes a return to the Scottish Government on the supply of new housing (Housing Land Audit Completion Figures). The 2015/16 return was 373, reducing to 247 in 2016/17 and includes both private development and development by Housing Associations.
- 5.3 As indicated in Section 3, it is anticipated housebuilding is likely to increase. During 2016/17, there were 1324 planning applications, 3% more than 2015/16. The number of applications received thus far in 2017/18 is running 12% ahead of the same period in 2016/17. This increase will, over time, manifest in more property registrations and consequently more work for SBC's Democratic Services.
- 5.4 From desk-based research undertaken, around half of other Scottish Local Authorities charge for property numbering, including Edinburgh, Midlothian and Dumfries and Galloway.

5.5 As consultation is not required to number properties, once a request is received, Democratic Services contact Royal Mail, and then follow the process as outlined in Section 4.1. A postcode will then be allocated and the applicant can then request, for example, new wheeled bins by phone or via the SBC website.

5.6 Of the 15 local authorities who currently have a fee for property numbering, 3 have a set fee per property:

Council	Set price per house
Angus Council	£100
Dumfries & Galloway	£40
Highland	£150

5.7 Other Local Authorities use a sliding scale. For example Midlothian charges anyone making an application to number one property £80, £100 for 2-10 properties, £150 for 11-25 properties and so unit charges reduce significantly using this approach. Argyll & Bute takes an alternative sliding scale approach, £80 for 1 property, £40 each for between 2 and 50 properties and £50 each for more than 50 properties. **Appendix 1** provides details of each sliding scale.

5.8 Neighbouring local authorities use a mixture of set fees (Dumfries and Galloway) and sliding scales (Midlothian and City of Edinburgh). Additional research has also revealed that Northumberland County Council charges £200 for Street Naming, and £50 for numbering with additional plots £5 thereafter.

5.9 Housing Developments in the Scottish Borders tend to be relatively small in scale. Under the proposed charging structure, charges for developers are illustrated as follows:

- 3 house development on an existing street – total charge £225.
- 1 new street with a 5 house development – total charge £525.
- 2 new streets with a total of 20 houses - total charge £1,800.

5.10 Because the provision of affordable housing is a priority for Scottish Borders Council, consideration was given during the research to the impact that the introduction of any fees could have on the development of such housing by RSLs, and whether or not exemptions should apply to affordable housing new build and conversion/remodelling. The number of affordable housing completions each year (including affordable housing delivered through new build, conversion and remodelling) is shown in the table below:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
110	68	59	198	100

5.11 Six other Local Authorities who have introduced property numbering fees were contacted during the research (Stirling, Fife, Argyll & Bute, Midlothian, West Dunbartonshire, City of Edinburgh) and no exemptions are given for RSLs in these local authority areas. When Fife Council introduced fees, their Officers spoke to many other Local Authorities and it was clear that the majority felt that private developers would feel

targeted if they were to be charged and from the list above, most felt it easier and clearer to charge all developers. SBC already exempts RSLs from certain developer contributions and given the fact that SBC is simply wishing to cover its costs, officers would recommend that charges are applied. (SBC officers have already discussed the implications of charging with RSLs).

- 5.12 Similarly, relief to encourage developments in the Borders Railway "Corridor" or in other specific development areas was also considered as part of the research. However again, the small charging rate proposed is unlikely to influence the location of private developments.

6 House renaming

- 6.1 As well as dealing with street naming and property numbering requests free of charge, SBC also undertakes the administration for requests for house renaming on behalf of individuals. This is also something that 6 other Councils charge for as follows:

Council	Renaming an existing property
Angus Council	£100
Argyll & Bute	£77
Fife Council	£28
Midlothian	£50
Perth & Kinross	£52
West Dunbartonshire	£75

- 6.2 Whilst there is not a huge amount of renaming done each year, each one does require Democratic Services to liaise with all relevant bodies, as outlined in Section 4.1.

7 Conclusions and Proposals

- 7.1 There are a number of reasons why SBC should consider the introduction of charging at this current time:
- As with all Local Authorities, SBC's financial situation, both currently and over the longer term, requires that it looks to make services efficient and cost effective, ensuring that public money is used as prudently as possible to address a wide range of priorities. Where charging can be introduced, all options should be explored in order that other key priorities can be invested in;
 - The adopted Local Development Plan (2016) has made provision for significant housing development over the next 8 years, and the SHIP estimates the provision for between 1100-1200 affordable houses between 2017 and 2022. Indications within the Planning Services would suggest that planning applications are on the increase;
 - Other similar rural and neighbouring councils are now charging to provide the same service and at the very least covering administration costs associated with the processes and ensuring best value.

- 7.2 Based on an assessment of similar rural and neighbouring local authorities, and the scale and type of development in the Scottish Borders, **Appendix 2** models potential income for SBC, based on the set fee approach, and the following is being proposed:
- Introduce a set fee for requests to **name streets**, covering consultation and administration costs. It is recommended that a fee of **£150** is set in line with similar rural and neighbouring local authorities (*the £1200 fee set by Perth & Kinross is viewed as extremely high and has therefore been excluded from consideration*)
 - Introduce a set fee for requests to **number properties** (including remodelled properties that require to be numbered / renumbered) covering administration costs. A set fee approach would enable simpler collection of fees, including through "e-Forms". It is recommended that a fee of **£75** is charged. A sliding scale option for Property Numbering charging was considered (e.g. in Midlothian) but the fees per unit reduce significantly using this approach, and developments in the Borders tend to be smaller in size.
 - Introduction of a set fee for requests to **rename a property**, covering administration costs. It is recommended that a fee of **£75** is introduced.
 - Some concessions were considered namely:
 - Relief for RSLs (Registered Social Landlords)
 - Relief to encourage developments in the Borders Railway "Corridor" or in other specific development areas

However, given the relatively small charging being introduced to cover costs only, it was felt that it was fairer to introduce consistent charging across all sectors and areas within the Scottish Borders.

- 7.3 Officers recommend that all requests for street naming, numbering or renaming made on or after 1 December 2017 are subject to charging, including those that relate to planning applications already in the system. SBC's website will be updated accordingly.
- 7.4 Whatever is decided by Elected Members, it is recommended that an e-form is introduced (combined with online payments if charging is approved). At the moment, Democratic Services often receive requests where key information is missing which then involves going back to the applicant which can be time consuming.
- 7.5 Currently, when developers, RSLs, individuals or other applicants contact SBC to request these services, no online form exists to instigate this process, with information coming in to SBC in a variety of ways- phone calls, emails, and drop-in to Customer Services etc. and with varying levels of detail at initial point of contact. Consequently, Democratic Services staff often have to go back to the individual, the developer or the RSL to request more information. The Service also spend time contacting the SBC Planning Service to clarify missing information, planning reference numbers etc.
- 7.6 As well as allowing SBC to detail fees on the website (either fixed or on a sliding scale), an e-form will ensure that all required information is

gathered from the applicant at first point of contact, as fields would be mandatory, avoiding missing information and ultimately cutting down on transaction time and cost.

- 7.7 Similar to the submission of a planning application, payments could then be taken online, or by cheque, but the administration process for the request would not start on behalf of the applicant until payment has been received, ensuring that SBC's costs are, at the very least, covered.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

- (a) If members choose not to introduce charging, then £22k will have to be found from elsewhere across SBC services from 2017/18 onwards.
- (b) If members do introduce charging, then any additional income, above the full year annual income target of £22k (which aims to cover the administration costs associated with dealing with requests) can be re-invested in services associated with additional development e.g. street cleansing, waste collection and disposal, schools, winter maintenance etc.

8.2 Risk and Mitigations

The report fully describes all the elements of risk that have been identified in relation to this project and no specific additional concerns need to be addressed.

8.3 Equalities

A Stage 1 EIA has been completed and it was clear there would be no impact on any of the equality characteristics.

8.4 Acting Sustainably

Given the minimal costs per street/unit here, relative to overall development costs, this new approach is unlikely to impact development activity.

8.5 Carbon Management

There are no effects on carbon emissions.

8.6 Rural Proofing

Other similar and neighbouring rural local authorities have also introduced charging. Charging would be introduced both in towns and rural areas of the Scottish Borders so there would be no detrimental effects on rural areas.

8.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit & Risk, Service Director HR and Clerk to the Council have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

9.2 Chief Executives of Registered Social Landlords have been informed of the proposals in this report and given the opportunity to comment.

Approved by

Jenni Craig
Service Director, Customer and Communities

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Sarah Watters	Policy, Performance, Planning

Background Papers: n/a

Previous Minute Reference: n/a

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Sarah Watters can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Appendix 1: Scottish Local Authority Property Numbering Charges
Sliding Scale basis

Argyll & Bute	Fees
1 Property	£80
2-50 properties	£40 each
50+properties	£20 each

City of Edinburgh	Fees
1 Property	£45
2-5 Properties	£95
6-10 Properties	£131
11-25 Properties	£172
26-50 Properties	£282
51-100 Properties	£428
101-150 Properties	£803
151-200 Properties	£964
201+ Properties	£1,068

Clackmannanshire	Fees
1-5 Properties	£25
6-10 Properties	£75
11-25 Properties	£150
26-50 Properties	£275
51-75 Properties	£425
100+ New Units	£625

Midlothian	Fees
1 Property	£50
2-10 Properties	£100
11-25 Properties	£150
26-50 Properties	£250
51-80 Properties	£350
81-100 Properties	£450
101-199 Properties	£550
200+ Properties	£600 + £15 per plot

Stirling	Fees
1 Property	£81
2-5 Properties	£117
6-10 Properties	£161
11-25 Properties	£321
26-50 Properties	£536
51-100 Properties	£804
101+ Properties	£1,072

West Dunbartonshire	Fees
1 Property	£75
2-5 Properties	£110
6-10 Properties	£150
11-25 Properties	£300
26-50 Properties	£500
51-100 Properties	£750
101+ Properties	£1,000

**Appendix 2: Modelled Income for SBC Based on Set Fee Approach
(Range relates to range of fees charged by other councils)**

"Top of Range" Model	Units Per Annum	Fee	Income
Street Naming	21	£1,200	£25,200
Property Numbering	300	£150	£45,000
Property Re-Naming *	5	£100	£500
Total			£70,700

"Bottom of Range" Model	Units Per Annum	Fee	Income
Street Naming	21	£100	£2,100
Property Numbering	300	£40	£12,000
Property Re-Naming *	5	£28	£140
Total			£14,240

"Median of Range" Model	Units Per Annum	Fee	Income
Street Naming	21	£150	£3,150
Property Numbering	300	£100	£30,000
Property Re-Naming *	5	£64	£320
Total			£33,470

Proposed Model (meeting income target)	Units Per Annum	Fee	Income
Street Naming	21	£150	£3,150
Property Numbering	300	£75	£22,500
Property Re-Naming *	5	£75	£375
Total			£26,025

* Data not available so minimal figure assumed

Note: SBC Averages

An average of 21 street naming instances per year 2014-2016 (Range 19 to 23)

An average of 297 completed properties 2012/13 through to 2016/17 (Range 247 to 373 per Housing Land Audit. Note that 16/17 figures are still "draft")