

Report on	Review of Local Authority Property Certificate Fees 2023
Date of Meeting	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer	Terry Scullion, Assistant Director Property Services
Contact Officer	P J Fox, Building Control Development Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek members approval of the proposed fees changes for Local Authority property certificates.
2.0	Background
2.1	The Council Property Certificate system arises from an agreement in the early 1990's between the Law Society (representing solicitors) and local Councils, as a means of ascertaining information, which is useful in legal searches relating to the conveyancing process for land and property.
2.2	The Council Property Certificate is a series of questions asked about a specific address. The primary respondents to a property certificate application within Mid Ulster District Council are the Building Control Service and Environmental Health, with the internal process being primarily administered by the Building Control Department.
2.3	A property certificate application is usually submitted by a solicitor acting on behalf of a client. In most cases, a property certificate is submitted due to the sale of a property, mortgaging of a property, transfer of ownership or other related issues regarding a property.
2.4	Currently, approximately 2,000 applications are submitted to the Building Control Service on an annual basis.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members may recall that in 2020, Councils agreed to increase the Council's Property Certificate fee from £60 to £70 fixed until a further review in 2023. This review has now been undertaken by officers at a regional level and given the increasing cost pressures on councils, officers have obtained SOLACE approval for the following proposal :-

<p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p>'To mitigate against future inflationary costs to Councils, officers have obtained SOLACE approval to the concept of applying a 3 year inflationary fee review cycle meaning a further review would not be required until 2026, unless there were significant changes to the Council Property certificate process. In which case, Councils would reserve the right to review the fees.</p> <p>This proposed increase would assist Councils in maintaining adequate resources to ensure that the service is delivered in a prompt, efficient and professional manner. The slight differential between the Regional Property Certificate and Councils Property Certificate would also address the previous concerns raised by the Law Society that the two fees being the same had sometimes led to confusion in applications from solicitors and agents.</p> <p>This would increase the fees as outlined below effective from 1st July 2023:</p> <p>Standard Charges</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="245 770 1310 1128"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="245 770 740 882">Nature of Search</th> <th data-bbox="740 770 1027 882">Current Fee</th> <th data-bbox="1027 770 1310 882">Revised Fee from 1st July 2023</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="245 882 740 943">Standard 10 year search</td> <td data-bbox="740 882 1027 943">£70</td> <td data-bbox="1027 882 1310 943">£90</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="245 943 740 1003">Search back to 1973</td> <td data-bbox="740 943 1027 1003">£95</td> <td data-bbox="1027 943 1310 1003">£122</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="245 1003 740 1064">Specified 10 year search</td> <td data-bbox="740 1003 1027 1064">£70</td> <td data-bbox="1027 1003 1310 1064">£90</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="245 1064 740 1128">Follow-up 10 year search</td> <td data-bbox="740 1064 1027 1128">£30</td> <td data-bbox="1027 1064 1310 1128">£38</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Nature of Search	Current Fee	Revised Fee from 1 st July 2023	Standard 10 year search	£70	£90	Search back to 1973	£95	£122	Specified 10 year search	£70	£90	Follow-up 10 year search	£30	£38
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<p>4.0</p>	<p>Other Considerations</p>															
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: Fees increase as detail in section 3.4 above.</p> <p>Human: Within Current Resources</p> <p>Risk Management: None</p>															
<p>4.2</p>	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: None</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: None</p>															
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>															
<p>5.1</p>	<p>Members are requested to note the content of this report and approve the increase in fees for Local Authority property certificates as detailed in section 3.4.</p>															

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A