

REPORT FOR EDLC BOARD	
<b>Report Title:</b>	Removal of Library Recovery Charges
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Craig Elliott - Wilson
<b>Date:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2023
<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	4
<b>Report No:</b>	EDLCT/105/23/CE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the removal of library recovery charges and to seek approval for the resulting recommendations.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Historically, library services have been charging library members for the late return of library books, and other stock items, for many decades. EDLC continues to apply these recovery charges, for adults only, while most other local authority library services have now removed these fines.
- 2.2 Library fines are traditionally viewed as an enforcement mechanism, designed to ensure that library books are returned within a given loan period, and to provide increasing penalties for late return of items.
- 2.3 Although the current charges applied within EDLC libraries service can be viewed as an income stream, this is predicated on the borrower behaving in a way they are not supposed to, i.e., retaining books beyond their due return date. Ultimately, if every library member returned their books on time, there would be no income. Actual income from these charges has been declining year on year as library members have changed their habits; to the extent that income targets are not being met. (see table 1)
- 2.4 The cost of living crisis is adding pressure to family budgets and, at the same time, libraries are struggling to encourage members to return, in person, to branches. A fear of being charged for late return, or loss of an item, presents an additional barrier to users returning to libraries.
- 2.5 The new national strategy for public libraries in Scotland, published Autumn 2022, includes the strategic aim to *“Reflect the rich and diverse communities in both library resources and programming to make them accessible to all”* One of the local actions within this strategic aim is to *“remove financial penalties for all borrowers”*
- 2.6 Out of the 32 Scottish local authorities, 26 currently have no fines in place and 6, including East Dunbartonshire, currently apply charges for adult borrowers.

### 3. Library charge income target versus actual

#### 3.1 Table 1

Year	Income target	Actual income	notes
2017/18	£8,500	£8,004	
2018/19	£8,500	£7,203	
2019/20	£8,500	£6,631	
2020/21	Nil	Nil	lockdown
2021/22	£6,600	£368	Limited service
2022/23	£6,600	£2,907	End of year forecast

### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.1 It is recommended that the Board:-

- a) Notes the background information provided on the proposed removal of library recovery charges.
- b) Approve the removal of library recovery charges with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.