

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: **Development Control Committee**

Date: **14 February 2012**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION
ADVICE**

Contact Officer: Chris Evans, Manager, Major Developments Team and Tony Stewart,
Manager, Non Majors Team
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Chief Officer: Bob McQuillan, Chief Planner

Ward: N/A

1. Reason for report

Members considered reports on charges for pre-planning application advice at the meeting in March, when it was decided that a review of the charging system be carried out after 6 months.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 Members note the report.

2.2 Members agree the suggested amendments/additions to the schedule of fees and a recommendation be made to the Portfolio Holder accordingly.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy.
 2. BBB Priority: Quality Environment.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost Cr £70k income projected for 2011/12
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring cost.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Pre-application fee income budget
 4. Total current budget for this head: £60k
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget 2011/12
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 102 ftes
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory requirement. Local authorities can make charges for pre-application meetings by virtue of powers in the Local Government Act 2003 and Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Those who make planning applications for development in the Borough
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

3.1 On 8 March the Committee received 2 reports (items 7 and 8) as follows –

- Introduction of charges for pre-planning application advice for on Non-Major Developments
- Review of charges made for pre-planning application advice for Major Developments.

Charges for such advice have been made in respect of Major Developments since January 2008, and the Committee decided to increase charges generally in line with other London Boroughs. It also agreed that advice for Non-Major Developments should be charged for from April 2011, and that a review of the service be undertaken after a period of 6 months.

3.2 Fees received in the 10 months April, 2011- January, 2012, are as follows-

- (i) £25,055 for Non-Major Developments (see Appendix 1A for details)
- (ii) £35,033 for Major Developments

178 enquiries have been received in respect of the new Non-Major Developments service, about 70% of these concerned householder developments (£42 charge).

The total income received to date totals £60k and it is expected that income will be at least £70k by the year end, if the existing take-up of the service continues and compares with an estimated income budget of £60k.

3.3 The fees charged by other London Boroughs have been assessed, and though they vary, are generally in line with Bromley's charges for pre-application advice. However Bromley's £4k fee is about 30 to 50% higher than that for comparable developments in the other Boroughs.

3.4 Charging for advice on Non-Major Developments has replaced the current duty officer service, which was withdrawn in April, since which time the Planning and Engineering Reception has been merged with the main Civic Centre enquiry desk. This charge to the customer service provided by the Planning Division has not been universally welcomed, and the following is a summary of relevant comments made at an Agents Forum at the beginning of November, when the Chief Planner and managers from the Development Control section met local agents who submit planning applications –

- lack of availability of officers outside of the paid-for advice service means that it is difficult to get progress reports on applications including information about consultation responses and comments received from neighbours.
- the inability to negotiate during processing of applications causes problems and delays for the agents' clients, and leads to unnecessary refusals, hence adding to the costs of the Planning Service, it must be assumed.
- advice given for the £42 fee for householder developments is of a very general nature, mainly concerning relevant policies, and officers do not give any verbal or other advice to amplify this basic written advice.

3.5 In response to these comments it is suggested that a service be offered to provide a site visit and/or meeting regarding householder developments, for the same fee as that made for shopfronts, advertisements etc. i.e. £180.

3.6 Attached to this report as Appendix 1B, is a draft amended schedule of fees. It is suggested that the same charge be made for advice regarding telecommunications development,

whether it is for prior approval of details or requires planning permission. The following developments were not included in the schedule, and it is suggested that they be added –

- minerals and waste development
- developments on site of > 1ha not falling within above categories
- prior notification of agricultural development
- amendments to permitted major schemes
- details required by conditions

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Should the current volume of take-up of the pre-planning application advice service continue to the end of the year, income of £70k is achievable for the year 2011/12. This compares to an income budget of £60k. The extra £10k income generated has been used to partly offset the shortfall of income from planning applications.
- 4.2 It should be borne in mind that demand for the service cannot be predicted to continue necessarily, particularly as the impact of the recession in the near future is not known.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy, Legal and Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Reports to Development Control Committee on 08/03/11