

**MINUTE OF THE ITEM CONSIDERED AT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2012**

**47 REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION
ADVICE**

At a Committee meeting held on 8 March 2011, Members reviewed charges made for pre-planning application advice for Major Developments and agreed the introduction of charges for pre-planning application advice for non-major developments. Members requested that a review of the charging system be undertaken after six months.

Members considered an updating report outlining the amount of income received in respect of pre-planning advice in the 10 months from April 2011-January 2012. A revised schedule of fees was also attached to the report.

Mr Stewart informed Members that some complaints had been received since the Planning Division began charging for the customer service it provided and made reference to the issues set out in the report.

All current fees charged for advice would be subject to a 4.5% increase. In particular, Members were requested to note the introduction of a revised arrangement for householder advice. There would now be a fee of £44 for basic advice on the relevant planning policies, the planning process and other material considerations and a fee of £188 for more detailed advice and guidance following a visit to the applicant's premises.

A schedule of pre-planning application advice service fees (inclusive of VAT) was set out in Appendix 2 of the report. Some new charges had been incorporated and these were highlighted in italic print.

Councillor Fawthrop proposed and Members agreed, that the householder proposals, shop front advertisement and other non-householder proposals fees be increased to £48 (including VAT).

Councillor Auld was concerned with the content of advice given for the current £42 fee for householder developments. He referred to a recent case within his Ward where one householder having paid the fee, received statements and technical information drawn from the Unitary Development Plan. Councillor Auld questioned what sort of advice householders would receive if they paid the higher charge.

Mr Stewart replied that the £42 fee was paid for general advice given to householders with little or no knowledge of the planning process. It was not intended to provide detailed guidance on a particular scheme as this would normally require a site visit and a greater commitment of officer time. The higher fee of £188 would be charged when more detailed advice on a specific

scheme is required. In such cases a site visit will be made and officers will be able to give an indication of the likely outcome of a planning application.

Having noted that the fee for changes to use over 2,000 sq m of floor space was 30-50% higher than that for comparable developments in other Boroughs, Councillor Fookes believed that Bromley's £4k fees should be reduced as the Authority ran the risk of developers going to other Boroughs.

Mr Stewart responded that in the context of overall development costs and benefits £4k was not a lot of money to pay for such large scale development proposals and the charge had willingly been accepted by those seeking this type of advice.

Councillor Joel referred to instances where fees had been paid for advice on applications which had subsequently been refused. He suggested that free advice should be given on any future applications.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) the report be noted;**
- 2) the fees charged for householder proposals, shop front advertisement and other non-householder proposals, be increased to £48 (including VAT);**
- 3) the suggested amendments/additions to the schedule of fees be agreed; and**
- 4) the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation be recommended to agree the suggested amendments/additions to the schedule of fees.**