

Report for: Regulatory Committee 21 January 2019

Title: Planning Services fees and charges

Report authorised by: Emma Williamson- AD Planning

Lead Officer: Emma Williamson- AD Planning

Ward(s) affected: ALL

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Key.

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1. The Council's income policy requires an annual review of the level of the fees and charges levied upon service users with a view to ensuring that income is maximised commensurate with the full recovery of costs.
- 1.2. This report sets out the Fees & Charges that are proposed to be applied to services in Development and Management, Building Control and Land Charges for the year 2019/20.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Regulatory Committee is asked:
 - To approve to increase the fee or charge rates for Development Management to reflect the revised hourly rates and levels of work required to deliver the services as set out in Appendix One.
 - To approve to increase the fee or charge rates for Building Control services as set out in appendix 3, these are broadly in line with inflation for the most part.
 - To note that there is no proposal to increase the Land Charges fees as these already achieve cost recovery. The fees are set out in Appendix 4.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1. It is a requirement to review fees and charges annually. The financial position of the Council supports the view that levels of fees and charges should be maximised taking into account all relevant factors including the effect on service users and any consequent demand for services.

4. Alternative options considered

- 4.1. Not raising the fees in line with inflation was considered and discounted given the need for the Council to recover the costs of providing these services.

5. Review of Fees & Charges

- 5.1. The principles underpinning the Council's external income policy are that all fees and charges are reviewed annually and income is maximised within current service and policy objectives. The competitiveness of the market in which the service operates and the effect of price on demand and overall income yield should be considered. Some services are restricted to cost recovery.

- 5.2. The MTFS assumes that fees and charges increase by a minimum of 3.3% unless there is good reason not to, which should be explained. This represents the underlying CPI rate when the annual service review of fees & charges commenced.
- 5.3. The Planning Service has reviewed the basis on which the fees have been calculated, principally the number of hours which the services require to deliver them. In addition we have reviewed the way that the Planning Service hourly rates have been calculated.
- 5.4. A number of fees and charges cannot be set by the Cabinet. Regulation 2(6) of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 provides that charges for certain approvals, consents, permits and licenses (e.g. licensing/planning/consent under the Highways Act 1980) may not be made by the Executive (Cabinet). These fees are set by the Council's Regulatory Committee and it is these fees that are set out in this report.

6. Development Management fees and charges (see Appendix 1)

- 6.1. The service has reviewed charges relating to pre-application advice and planning performance agreements relating to residential and commercial properties and increases have been applied to these charges.
- 6.2. During 2015/16 the service undertook a detailed review of fees and charges. This resulted in a schedule that reflects the actual costs of delivering the service and was benchmarked against other Local Authority Development Management Services. The benchmark study is attached at Appendix 2. The Service has redone this detailed review taking account of the actual times that are taken to deliver these services.
- 6.3. An equalities screening has been completed in relation to the proposed changes. Although a number of these raises are substantial the fee increases are not anticipated to impact disproportionately on any of the protected groups. It should also be noted that these charges would only apply to those that are carrying out development and these fees would be a very small proportion of the overall cost of a development project.
- 6.4. It is not anticipated that this will increase the income of the Planning Service, rather it is likely that it will offset and expected reduction in planning applications and pre-applications in the current years.

Building Control fees and charges (See Appendix 3)

- 6.5. Charges are required to be set so that the Building Regulations service breaks even over a 3-year period.
- 6.6. During 2015/16 the service undertook a detailed review of fees and charges. This resulted in a schedule that reflects the actual costs of delivering the service and was benchmarked against other Local Authority Building Control Services. Therefore, it is proposed that fees and charges increase by an average of x in line with inflation.
- 6.7. An equalities screening has been completed in relation to the proposed changes. The proposed fee increases are low, with 4. most under or at the rate of inflation. Therefore, the fee increases are not anticipated to impact disproportionately on any

of the protected groups. It should also be noted that these charges would only apply to those those that are carrying out development and these fees would be a very small proportion of the overall cost of a development project.

Local Land Charges charges

- 6.8. Charges are required to be set so that the Local Land Charges service breaks even over a 3-year period.
- 6.9. During 2016-17 the LLC Service undertook a detailed review of the fees and charges which were both based against other Local Authority LLC services and also on cost of staff producing the searches. The current charges are attached as appendix 4.
- 6.10. The fees have been set so that we do not create a profit in a 3 year period and also so that we, as a Local Authority, do not also set our fees so low as to impact the other, (Private Search) companies, in accordance with the guidance on fees setting under the Local Land Charges Act 1975.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1. Maximising the Council's resources, in particular in the current financial climate, is a key part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, the review of fees and charges has taken into account the Council's strategy and policies.

8. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1	Development Management charges
Appendix 2	Benchmarking table with other London Boroughs
Appendix 3	Building Control charges
Appendix 4	Land Charges charges

9. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1. Not Applicable.