

Report for: Regulatory Committee 12 February

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 and Building Control for the year 2018/19.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Regulatory Committee is asked:
 - To approve to increase the fee or charge rates for Development Management and Building Control services as set out in appendix 1 and 2, these are broadly in line with inflation.
 - To note the Cabinet member signing in November 2017 that accepted the 20% increase in nationally set Planning Application fees.
 - To note that there is no proposal to increase the Land Charges fees as these already achieve cost recovery.

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 MTFFS assumes that fees and charges increase by a minimum of 2.4% 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. In some cases, where a 2.4% increase would give a very small cost increase and/or result in a charging rate that would be difficult to administer e.g. a resultant 36p charge might require disproportionate effort of maintaining change floats etc. Services have been asked to take account of factors such as the last time a rise was imposed (i.e. an assessment of the compounded inflationary rate) and make appropriate proposals; the proposed rate can be seen in the appendices.
- 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 an inflationary increase has mostly 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. Therefore, it is proposed that fees and charges increase by an average of 2.4% in line with inflation.
- 6.3. An equalities screening has been completed in relation to the proposed changes. The proposed fee increases are low, with 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.
- 6.4. In February 2017 the 'Fixing our broken housing market' White Paper set out proposals to increase nationally set planning fees by 20% on the basis that the additional income generated would be invested in local authority planning services. A Cabinet Member Signing decision was made on 30 November 2017 to accept the planned planning fee increases and any other changes from the date the regulations came into force. Regulation SI 2017 no. 1314 was made on 20th December 2017 which and the fee change was applied from 17th January 2018. The service forecast that this will generate an additional £250k - £300k income

annually which will be used to increase efficiency and reduce planning application processing times.

6.5.

Building Control fees and charges (See Appendix 2)

- 6.6. Charges are required to be set so that the Building Regulations service breaks even over a 3-year period.
- 6.7. 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 2.4% in line with inflation.
- 6.8. An equalities screening has been completed in relation to the proposed changes. The proposed fee increases are low, with 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.

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 Councils 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 I	Development Management charges
Appendix II	Building Control charges

9. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1. Not Applicable.