

Report to Cabinet



Date of Meeting	25 th February 2021
Portfolio	A Thriving Economy
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Public/Private Document	Public

Discretionary Fees & Charges - Planning

Executive Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 8th February 2021, the Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer, which presented proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2021/2022. The Committee resolved that the report be noted.
- 1.2 Following budget savings proposals provisionally agreed by Cabinet on 1st December 2020, the Planning service has been requested to identify ongoing savings to be realised from income generation. The proposed Discretionary Fees & Charges for Planning have since been reviewed to realise a further £30k budget saving through additional income generation during 2021/2022.

Recommendation

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the updated Discretionary Fees and Charges for Planning for 2021/22, following consultation.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 To meet the Council's requirement to set a balanced budget, the fees and charges in this report are proposed by Planning to realise a £30k budget saving through additional income generation during 2021/2022.

Key Points for Consideration

- 4.1 The Council carries out an annual review of discretionary fees and charges as part of the budget setting process. For the 2021/22 financial year, Cabinet on 28th July approved a general increase of 2%, as a basis for consultation.
- 4.2 At its meeting on 8th February 2021, the Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer, which presented proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2021/2022.

- 4.3 Following budget savings proposals provisionally agreed by Cabinet on 1st December 2020, the proposed Discretionary Fees & Charges for Planning have been reviewed to realise a £30k budget saving through additional income generation during 2021/2022.

Alternatives Considered

- 4.4 The alternative is to apply the previously agreed 2% uplift in line with inflation. This would compromise the ability of the Directorate to achieve the provisional budget saving during 2021/22, creating a budget pressure.

Costs and Budget Summary

- 5.1 A list of proposed fees and charges for Planning for 2021/22 is included in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 The proposal to increase charges as specified will achieve the £30k saving included within the provisional 2021/2022 budget.

Risk and Policy Implications

- 6.1 The Planning service has reviewed its charges against relevant legislation to ensure that all transactions remain compliant with the relevant statutes governing Local Authority activities.
- 6.2 Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 contains powers for Local Authorities to charge for discretionary services including pre-application advice. The power to charge is subject to a duty to secure that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges under that subsection does not exceed the costs of provision. It is therefore important to keep the fees under review.
- 6.3 The increase in fees and charges have been reviewed in light of similar charges being made for the provision of planning advice within other local authorities. The increase in charges, primarily for major development projects, are considered reasonable in this case. There remains strong developer interest in investing within the Borough and a pipeline of major projects expected over the coming months despite the economic uncertainty. It is not considered that the suggested increases in charges will reduce the level of developer engagement which presently takes place with the Planning service on these major projects at the pre-planning stage, or developer interest in investing within the Borough.

Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation has taken place with the portfolio holder and the Leadership Team. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been informed of the proposed charges for 2021/22.

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
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