

APPENDIX I

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 25 JANUARY 2011

Title:

CHARGING FOR DISCRETIONARY PLANNING ADVICE

[Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Taylor-Smith]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

The Council introduced discretionary charging in April 2009. It was reviewed in March 2010 and further changes were made to the schedule of charges. This report proposes additional areas of charging and refinements to the existing scheme. These changes will contribute towards the £5,000 increase in income included in the Star Chamber proposals list.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The advice service supports the achievement of corporate objectives to deliver affordable housing and leisure facilities and to improve the environment through the planning process. By encouraging good development, it should help improve lives and, by offering good advice at a cost effective rate, it provides value for money.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The Service is key in delivering development to meet all sections of the community. Most advice is given in the Planning Reception Area or Locality Offices, which are DDA compliant.

Climate Change Implications:

There are no direct implications.

Resource / Value for Money Implications:

The report proposes changes to the charging regime which will more closely reflect the cost of providing this service.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications. All guidance given to applicants clearly indicates that it is officer level advice.

Introduction:

1. Since April 2009, the Council has charged for most forms of pre-application advice. The schedule of charges was reviewed and updated from April 2010. A further review has been undertaken of the charging scheme. This has included benchmarking of other authorities and further analysis of the cost of providing advice to applicants. It is anticipated that the revisions to the charging scheme would be implemented from 1 April 2011.
2. This has indicated:
 - (i) there is scope to increase existing charging levels for some areas of advice to align closer with adjoining authorities;
 - (ii) there is potential to charge for other areas of advice, not currently charged for.
 - (iii) there is no justification to increase the charging structure for significant proposals (amended in March 2010)

Proposed increase in existing charging levels:

3. Areas for which an increased charge could be made are:
 - (i) Development Control Consultative Forums (DCCFs). These are resource intensive. These primarily provide benefit to applicants as a means of getting early feedback on proposals from Councillors, consultees and the community. It is considered that the applicant should largely fund the cost of these. A recent time / activity assessment has been carried out to record the cost of these to the Council to inform this.
 - (ii) Research fee - for checking and copying planning histories, revised to reflect officer time.
 - (iii) Householder and smallscale surgeries (not increased since 2009).
 - (iv) Written advice for householder and smallscale development (not increased since 2009).
 - (v) Small scale commercial written advice (not increased since 2009).

Introduction of charging for new areas of advice:

4. Advice, currently given, but exempted, for which a charge could be introduced:
 - (i) Permitted development written enquiries. Enquiries would be submitted together with sketch plans and a letter and receive a written officer-level response.

- (ii) Validation checks (“one stop shop” on checking new applications). The applicant would bring a set of completed plans and forms to Planning Reception for an over-the-counter check.
- (iii) Listed Building and Conservation Area pre-application advice.
- (iv) Tree advice.

In respect of (iii) and (iv) benchmarking reveals that charging for listed building advice is common in a number of other similar authorities. The advice would involve a site visit, meeting and meeting note. In relation to trees advice, most councils don't charge but it is considered reasonable that part of the cost of pre-application advice should be recovered. For both new areas the cost has been set low but should be reviewed after time in the blight of experience.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive agrees the revisions to the Council's discretionary charging scheme, as set out in the Annexe 1, for implementation from 1 April 2011.

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ANNEXE 1

	<u>Existing</u> (inc VAT)	<u>Proposed</u> (inc VAT)
<u>Development Control Consultation Forums (DCCFs)</u>	£1,200	£2,400
<u>Research fee</u>	£30	£40
<u>Planning Surgeries</u>		
Householder	30	30
Small scale proposals	96	120
<u>Written Pre Application Advice</u>		
Householder	50	50
Commercial developments (under 1000 sq. m.)	180	250
Residential (1 to 3 units)	180	250
Significant Application	1080	1080
<u>New Areas of Charging</u>		
Permitted development enquiries (written response)	-	30
Validation checks		30 (excluding householder applications)
Listed Building and Conservation Area advice		100
Tree advice		25

Concessionary rate for local businesses to be maintained at 15% reduction of agreed fee.

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