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| Committee: | Development Control Committee | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 27 January 2021 | | |
| Subject: | Scales of Charges to apply for 2021/22 | | |
| Report Author: | Dev Gopal, Service Director Finance, Revenue & Benefits | | |
| Contact Officer: | Darren Lambert/Sunny Sahadevan | 01582 | |
| | 546320 | | |
| Implications: | Legal <input type="checkbox"/> | Community Safety <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | Equalities <input type="checkbox"/> | Environment <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | Financial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Consultations <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | Staffing <input type="checkbox"/> | Other <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Wards Affected: | Click here to enter text. | | |

Purpose

1. To approve the revised Scale of Charges applying to Development Control Committee from 1st April 2021 for other charges.

Recommendations

2. **Development Control Committee is recommended to approve the proposed Scales of Charges to apply from 1st April 2021, subject to any amendments it deems necessary.**

Background

3. As part of the annual estimates process, managers undertake a review of the Scales of Charges to apply in the following year. The review covers the estimated cost of the service, the customer base for charges and any regulatory or statutory guidance that applies, to determine the final charges and income potential for each service. Where possible, chargeable services aim to, and in some cases are required by regulation, to fully recover the cost of providing the service.
4. The Council's approved Fees and Charges framework has been used as a basis for setting the charges. The main principles in the framework include:
 - setting charges that strive to cover the full cost of the service provided, where possible;
 - setting charges at a level that is fair to users and council tax payers, whilst ensuring inclusivity by offering concessions to the disadvantaged;
 - setting charges within the guiding principles of fairness, viability and consistency.
5. Income from charges remains vital to setting a balanced budget and maintaining the future provision of services.
6. Additionally, charges not set by regulatory or statutory guidance should increase by a minimum of the estimated consumer price inflation figure applying at each review, to help maintain income levels in proportion to costs.

7. Charges have been benchmarked against other neighbouring authorities or other local providers, where possible.

Report

8. The Appendices A1 and A2 detail the proposed charges to be approved by this Committee. The following symbols are used in the Scale of Charges schedules:

- * Statutory charge
- + VAT inclusive charge
- ++ VAT to be added where appropriate.

Development Control Application Fees (Appendix A1)

9. The schedule of charges for development control fees is set by statutory guidance.
10. Forecast income for the current year is expected to be in the region of £900,000.
11. A new range of charges are proposed for administering the Development Control application process to ensure that the Council will recover costs incurred. These charges are also aimed as a deterrent to try to ensure that applicants submit valid applications at the first time of asking and through the most efficient route.
12. It is also proposed to increase some existing charges for registering applications received by e-mail or as hard copies. It is proposed to increase the charge for Archive Document Requests Fast Track (within 10 working days) from £36 to £60, an increase of 66.7%, and postal applications from £100 to £120, an increase of 20%. The aim of the increases is to reflect the administrative and scanning resource required to provide the service, and to encourage increased use of the Planning Portal as a more efficient and cheaper alternative.

Planning Charges (Appendix A1)

13. There is no proposal to increase the hourly rate for replying to Professional Enquiries.

Development Control Documents, Enquiries and Copying Charges (Appendix A1)

14. There is no proposal to increase the charges for proposed charges for Requests for Development Control Documents.

Development Control Pre-Application Advice (Appendix A2)

15. The pre-application advice service began in January 2012 and is not a statutory function that the Council are obliged to provide. There is no proposal to increase Pre-application charges this year. Use of the Pre-Application Advice service is optional and does not guarantee an approved scheme but on the whole achieves better designed, more sustainable development in the town. The charges need to remain competitive to support the continued use of the service. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken last year to ensure that our charges are in line with most neighbouring authorities and nationally.

Proposal/Options

16. To approve the proposed fees for; i) development control documents, ii) the processing of application documents submitted to the Council by email or as hard copies and iii) pre-application advice as shown, or to set charges that are different from the service managers review.
17. There is no discretion on the Development Control Application Fees which are set by statute.

Appendix

Appendices A1 & A2 - Scales of Charges for approval

List of Background Papers - Local Government Act 1972, Section 100D

Working papers provided by service managers.

Implications

| Item | Details | Clearance Agreed By | Dated |
|----------------|---|--|--------------------|
| Legal | As indicated in this report, some of the charges levied by the Council are imposed by law. This means that the Council has no discretion and must amend its scale of charges in accordance with the fee set by law. Where a fee is not set by law, the Council may only make such charge as is reasonable based on all relevant factors and the increase in charge reflects the actual costs for the Council in providing that service. Any increase may only be such as is reasonable given the purpose of the charge concerned and, where there is guidance on the level of a particular charge or increase in that charge, the Council should not depart from that guidance without showing clear reasons for doing so, supported by appropriate evidence. | Stephen Sparshott, Solicitor | 15 January 2021 |
| Finance | The proposed charges are forecast to generate sufficient income to meet the proposed budget target for 2021/22. There is the potential that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic could continue into 2021/22, which may have an impact on the number and/or type of applications received by the service. | Dev Gopal, Service Director, Finance, Revenue & Benefits | 12 January 2021 |