

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2009
 title: INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES IN RELATION TO PLANNING ENQUIRIES
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
 principal author: JOHN MACHOLC

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To ratify the introduction of a fee for requests for various planning advice including pre-application discussions and other planning requests.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions - }
 - Community Objectives - }
 - Corporate Priorities - }
 - Other Considerations - }
- A well-managed Council, providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning and Development Committee agreed the principle of charges for pre-application advice and other planning related requests on the 16 July 2009. The recommendation was to authorise the Director of Development Services to proceed with further investigation at to the relevant charges and fees. This report outlines the suggested fees and the anticipated start date for charging for such advice beginning the 1 January 2010.

2.2 Since the initial report it is clear that more Councils have now introduced the charges and mechanisms for such advice.

2.3 In order to operate a simple and manageable approach I recommend that a three tier charging mechanism is adopted ranging from minor proposal request, intermediate proposal request and major proposal request. With also a reduced charge for purely written responses. The charging would range from £50 to £300 depending on the type of request and the nature of the proposal. (Please refer to Appendix 1 – The Charging Sheet – for further guidance.)

2.4 It is advocated that any requests have to be made on the appropriate form with the fee payable either before the proposed meeting or submitted at the time of the request. No work will take place until valid form, documents and fee have been submitted. (Please refer to Appendices 2 and 3 for additional forms.)

2.5 The Council will be committed to respond in writing within a specified period and that an officer will be allocated the case and the applicant informed accordingly. As part of the service a case officer will:

- research the history of the site to an appropriate level;
- undertake a site visit;
- identify and assess the prospective development against Council Policies;
- arrange and attend a site meeting if required;
- within 15 working days of meeting the Council will provide the detailed written response which will be signed and authorised by the Building and Development Control Manager or an appropriately designated officer.

2.7 In dealing with written responses it should be made clear that the views expressed are given in good faith and without prejudice to the formal consideration of any future planning application. Furthermore it is expected that the applicant will be fully aware that this advice is based on current policy and should local or national planning policies change, this might affect the advice given and may affect the consideration of any applications, particularly if applications are submitted some length of time after pre-application discussions take place.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – This work is currently carried out not as a priority by existing members of staff and therefore is anticipated that the work could be managed effectively on existing resources but there would be a need to ensure prioritisation.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
- Political – None.
- Reputation – It may still be seen by some that this is an additional charging mechanism and concern that charging for pre-application advice made give a perception of accepting the scheme, however, I consider that adequate safeguards can be imposed to minimise this risk.

4 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

4.1 Accept the charging mechanisms and that the Council operate this policy on all new enquiries submitted after the 1 January 2010.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Introduction of charges in relation to planning enquiries – Planning and Development Committee report 16 July 2009.

For further information please ask for John Macholc, extension 4502.

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