

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

08 January 2008

Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2008/09

This report brings forward for consideration as part of the budget setting process for 2008/09 proposals in respect of those fees and charges that fall within the remit of this Board.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out proposals for fees and charges for 2008/09 which fall within the remit of this Board.

1.1.2 The budgetary guidance issued to Chief Officers for the 2008/09 budget cycle, and approved by Cabinet, reiterated the objective to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere.

1.1.3 The proposals regarding fees and charges outlined in this report are incorporated within the Revenue Estimates reported to the Finance and Property Advisory Board. Any changes required following this meeting will be incorporated before the Estimates are presented to Cabinet on 5 February 2008.

1.2 Incidental Fees and Charges

1.2.1 In order to comply with Freedom of Information requirements, charges for copying of documents have been set at:

10p per sheet for A4 or A3 black and white

15p per sheet for A4 or A3 colour

25p per sheet for A2 or larger black and white or colour

Plus postage where appropriate

1.2.2 The Ordnance Survey has revised the way in which we are allowed to provide OS extracts for planning and building regulations applications. We no longer provide them "over the counter" but rather provide online access to a reseller (either via the PCs in reception or direct from the website). As a result we no longer levy an administration charge for providing these copies.

- 1.2.3 As mentioned at paragraph 1.1.3 the impact of these changes are reflected in the draft revenue estimates.

1.3 Building Control Fees

- 1.3.1 I have reviewed the Building Control application fee scales in the light of projected costs of providing a competitive and good quality service and the objective of maximising income at the point of service delivery. The judgement on fee setting also has to be balanced with Government guidance that local authorities should manage building control budgets to ensure that fees raised cover the costs incurred in providing the fee-earning aspects of the service and that no surplus in income is generated, calculated over a three-year rolling period.
- 1.3.2 For 2008/09 a fee increase of 3% is proposed to both Table 1 (New dwellings) and Table 2 (Extensions, loft conversions etc). An adjustment has been made at the lower end of Table 3 by removing the lowest band (£75.00 for works up to £1,000) and having the first band of up to £2,000 where a charge of £120.00 is made. This is a more accurate reflection of cost and is in line with many other districts in Kent. **Annex 1.**
- 1.3.3 Members will also recall that an additional income stream was introduced in January 2005 when electrical installations were brought within the scope of the Building Regulations. We decided to make use of consultants to deal with this area of work as our staff are not qualified in electrical safety and our insurers recommended that inspection and testing of electricians should be carried out by specialists. The charge for this service is now £130.00 plus VAT which is then claimed back by our contractors. Again this is in line with the other Kent authorities and no change is proposed. However, I would propose to retain the previously delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation to amend the charge to respond to market conditions during the year if necessary.
- 1.3.4 Fees for all other developments are based on building costs. In this respect the income from this source reflects the current construction cost inflation. However for works over £1m there is a sound case for the Council to continue the flexible approach to enable the negotiation of fees on a case by case basis. This approach enables the flexibility to respond to competition for Building Control services in the market. Examples of schemes secured utilising this approach last year include such projects as West Kent College, the River Centre and Judd School, where we had to provide quotes in competition with the private sector and made successful bids. In this way the risk of losing work to the private sector can be minimised. It is therefore proposed that fees for work of this scale continue to be negotiable but based on the hourly rate charged for professional advice.

1.4 Planning Policy Documents

- 1.4.1 A fairly radical overhaul of the price of Planning Policy Documents has been undertaken to reflect the progress with the adoption of the Local Development

Framework (LDF) and the effective replacement of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan by the LDF documents as they are adopted during the course of the next few months and by the fact that only some of the remaining Local Plan policies are still in force following the Secretary of State's Direction on Saved Policies. This means that the parts of the Local Plan that are still in force are covered by the Saved Policies Document that now forms part of the LDF.

- 1.4.2 The recommended prices of all documents that are for sale under the Planning Policy banner are set out under **Annex 2**. In the light of the progress with the adoption of the LDF, and the fact that most documents, other than historic ones, are now available to be downloaded free from the internet, the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure is proposing to simplify the overall pricing structure. The Local Plan (which is now out of print) used to cost £60 to purchase. The intention is to charge £10 for each of the adopted Development Plan Documents (including the Saved Policies Document) which means that once all three DPDs are adopted the total cost of the Development Plan Documents (including the Saved Policies Document) will be £40 plus the cost of the Proposals Map at £20 (if all three sheets are purchased). Thus the total cost of the Development Plan will be the same but can be purchased in parts.
- 1.4.3 Other technical background documents have a very limited market and are mainly purchased by consultants for planning appeals and inquiries. Their cost reflects to some extent not just their printing costs but also their production costs. The prices of other historic Development Plan documents have been reduced because the market for these is extremely limited though, unlike the Local Plan, they are only available in hard copy.
- 1.4.4 The impact of making these changes to the price of Planning Policy documents on the Council's overall budget is marginal. Much more significant is the fact that total sales are predicted to continue to decrease as a result of most Planning Policy documents now being available on the website. It is therefore unlikely that there will be high demand for hard copies.

1.5 Planning Fee and Related Income

- 1.5.1 Unlike Building Control fees, planning application fees are prescribed nationally by Government. The Government are currently proposing a significant increase which, broadly speaking, will add approximately 11% to domestic applications and an average of 25% to other applications. This will be subject to detailed regulations but I have taken this general level into account in the forward budget estimates.
- 1.5.2 Other proposals for changes to income relevant to planning applications are covered elsewhere on this agenda.

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 It is recommended that Cabinet be recommended to:

- 1) Agree the Building Control application fees for dwellings and domestic extensions set out in **Annex 1**.
- 2) Agree that the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure retains the delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation to amend the charge in respect of Approved Document P (Electrical Installations) to respond to market conditions.
- 3) Continue to authorise the Chief Building Control Officer to continue to **NEGOTIATE** Building Control application fees for other building works with a value exceeding £1million.
- 4) to confirm the prices of Planning Policy documents set out in **Annex 2**.

Background papers:

Nil

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