

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**17 November 2010**

**Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure and Director of Finance**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision**

**1 DISCRETIONARY PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL FEES**

**1.1 Planning**

- 1.1.1 Planning application and related fees are prescribed nationally with no local discretion. As far as I am aware there are no proposals for these to be increased for the next financial year although with many and varied changes being considered by the new Government we will need to keep this situation under review.
- 1.1.2 Since the publication of applications and decisions on the website we have found increasingly less demand for site histories, general research or copying of documents. For the last few years we have not charged for these services as the costs in staff time making-up accounts far outweighs the benefits of what was a very limited income stream. We now make more detail available, as requested, on the website and require the enquirers to carry the cost of the consumables when reproducing copies.
- 1.1.3 We levy charges for pre-application enquiries but this income stream has been relatively weak in the last year no doubt due to the current economic situation and conditions of the development and property sector. This charging regime is largely based on our own costs of providing the service. We did not increase the charges last year for fear of further market resistance and I propose the same approach in this round of charge setting.
- 1.1.4 Any charged-for photocopying is charged at the Corporate rate set elsewhere.
- 1.1.5 Income from sales of documents, particularly those related to the Local Development Framework, is very low indeed these days as a result of their availability electronically. It is not proposed to make any alterations to the charges for the limited amount of hard copies that are sold.

**1.2 Building Control**

- 1.2.1 With regard to the Building Control fees members will recall that, following changes to legislation (the Charging Regulations) the fee scheme was completely

revised and implemented on 1 October 2010. Under these circumstances I see no reason to revise the Building Control Charges at 1 April 2011, but will conduct a review at half year when the accuracy of the cost recovery of our scheme will be clearer.

1.2.2 Members' agreement to this strategy is sought.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

1.3.1 The Council has a duty to properly review its fees and charges annually

### **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.4.1 Planning fees are prescribed nationally and at present do not cover the cost of providing the development control service. Building Control fees have elements of discretion related to actual costs of the fee earning service

### **1.5 Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 It is important that as far as is possible fees are reviewed to reflect the cost of the service but consideration must also be given to the competitive position of the Building Control service.

### **1.6 Policy Considerations**

1.6.1 None.

### **1.7 Recommendations**

1.7.1 No changes be made to planning and building control discretionary fees for the reasons set out in this report.

Background papers:

Nil

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