

Report to Cabinet
12 December, 2012
Report of Head of planning services
Subject Planning – development management service standards

Item

11

KEY DECISION

Purpose

This report proposes revised service standards for the planning service including a revised approach to discretionary charging for pre-application advice and other changes to discretionary charges.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) agree the new service standards and discretionary charging as specified in Appendix 1
- (2) delegate authority to the deputy chief executive (operations), in consultation with the cabinet member for environment and development, to agree further minor changes to the service standards and the incorporation of other relevant information from other published documents prior to publication.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority “prosperous “A prosperous city” and the key measure of delivering new homes and jobs, in addition the “City of character and culture” and the planning service plan priority is to improve the delivery of the development management service.

Financial implications

Increase in income – proposals include increasing the range of items covered by pre-application discretionary fees and increasing the charges made for services that are currently charged for. These measures will increase income. It is difficult to estimate the impact in a full year as this will depend on the state of the market and the take up of the services offered. As some fees are based on a percentage of the statutory planning fee the recent uplift of 15% in planning fee levels will also impact on this. In a full year, in current economic conditions it is thought that the total discretionary income may increase to somewhere in the region of £60,000, a considerable increase from around £35,000 which arises from the current approach.

Ward/s: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Bremner – Environment and development

Contact officers

Graham Nelson Head of Planning

01603 212530

Ian Whittaker Planning Development Manager

01603 212528

Background documents

None

Report

Introduction

1. The current planning service standards were introduced in summer 2010 and included the introduction of discretionary charging for informal planning advice. Norwich City Council was the first planning authority in Norfolk and one of the first in the region to introduce such discretionary charging for planning services. The range of services for which discretionary charges can be made is limited as fees for applications are set by statute and other services (such as responses to requests about Environmental Impact Assessment) have to be given for free. Mostly it is informal pre-application advice that can be charged for.
2. It was always the intention to review these service standards and approach to charging for pre-application advice around a year following introduction. However, this review was delayed as the government announced in November 2010 that it was intending to allow local authorities to set planning fees locally to allow them to cover a greater proportion of their planning costs from the development industry.
3. In response to this announcement and subsequent consultation that took place during 2011 the planning service undertook a considerable amount of work with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and other local authorities to, firstly, assess the full cost of the development management service in a consistent manner, secondly agree new fee categories and thirdly the drafting of a new fee schedule so that there could be full cost recovery, with specific support and subsidy for certain elements in 2012-13. This work showed the total costs of the Norwich City Council's development management service as defined by PAS to be in the region of £1m - £1.1m. Statutory planning fees only cover a proportion of these costs, total planning fee income in 2011/12 was £355,000.
4. This led to a delay in revising the current service standards and approach to discretionary charging and revised assumptions about the level of planning income being built into 2012/13 budgets.
5. In July 2012, after the budget had been set for 2012-13, the government announced that it would not be allowing local authorities to set their own planning fees but instead would be introducing a 15 per cent increase in the national fees. This 15 per cent increase was intended to cover inflation in costs since fees were last fully revised in 2008. These higher fees came into effect on 22nd November.
6. The government has not totally abandoned the idea of local fee setting but there is no likelihood of this being adopted in the near future. It is therefore appropriate to consider the service standards and the approach to providing pre-application advice now.

Information to inform the approach to service standards and charging

7. There are a number of different sources of information that have been taken into account in revising the service standards and the approach to charging. This includes:

8. The wide ranging consultation exercise which took place in advance of the setting of this year's budget in the summer of 2011 looked at a whole range of measures. Planning matters were the subjects of three of the twenty proposals. The overall ranked response (as reported to cabinet on 9th November, 2011), showed the 1st ranked item being "charging the full cost of planning applications", a ranking of 10th for "reduce the level of consultation on planning applications to the legal minimum (for example only putting up notices rather than sending letters)" and a ranking of 12th for "charge for planning advice to those groups which currently get this at nil cost (this includes households, small businesses and charitable organisations)".
9. The first ranked item proposed a saving of £150,000 and which is now undeliverable as it required government to allow local planning authorities to set their own planning fees. The support for this savings proposal did nevertheless indicate a level of public support for increasing the proportion of the costs of providing the development management service recovered from the development industry.
10. In addition at the Developers Forum in May 2012 there was some discussion of the principle of pre-application charges. In the November 2012 meeting the proposed changes were explained in detail. There was a general consensus on the need for a properly resourced planning service and one which delivered pre-application advice. In current circumstances there was a somewhat reluctant acceptance of the need to charge for that advice. In particular, there was enthusiasm for face to face meetings and dialogue rather than just written responses, some concern over the high level of charges for the "intermediate" and "advanced" service and that post refusal feedback should be free. There was support for a "duty officer" to check through applications in person.
11. It is proposed to revise discretionary charging activities to seek to increase income to the planning service. The main source of discretionary revenue is the pre-application advice service. It is proposed to revise the way that informal pre-application advice is given by making it more responsive to the needs of the developer. The exceptions to charging for such advice are proposed to be very limited and are proposed to avoid disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups. No charges are proposed for householders proposing works which are wholly necessary due to their disability or for proposals for charities undertaking work directly related to their delivery of charitable aims (with the exception of private schools).
12. It is also not proposed to charge for advice relating solely to listed building issues (where there will be no planning application) or tree works. Although such charges would be unlikely to have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged groups they are not favoured as charging is considered likely to be counter-productive, potentially increasing incidence of harm to listed buildings or trees, and increasing costs relating to complaints and enforcement that would exceed money raised by the charges were they to be introduced.

Service standards

13. The current service standards are published on the council's website at:

<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/Planning/documents/Planningservicestandards.pdf>

14. A variety of amendments are proposed for clarity, efficiency and to increase the usefulness of the document. The main changes are summarised below. Details of changes are set out in Appendix 1.
15. The revised service standards encourage use of the Council's website for planning purposes by making clear how to access the following documentation:
 - a) all submitted information and drawings in an application and the comments of all formal consultees, including of external bodies;
 - b) that the reports by officers which recommend a decision are published on the website (Public Access);
 - c) all details of discharge of conditions once approved/refused.
16. It is also proposed to simplify current procedures following the receipt of comments on applications. At present an acknowledgement is sent following receipt, followed by notification of any committee referral some 7-9 days in advance of committee, finally a notice of the decision made is sent. In order to simplify processes, reduce the chance of human error in notifying, and to give customers more advance knowledge of future committee dates then a more comprehensive acknowledgement letter/email is proposed which will give advance notice of committee dates, how to find items on a forthcoming agenda and how to make comments in person at any future committee hearing. Decision notices will not be mailed out as routine they are now all published on the website. Overall this will reduce costs whilst giving earlier information to people commenting on applications.
17. The procedures relating to neighbour consultation policy and speaking at committee which are currently set out in the planning applications code of conduct are also proposed to be included in the service standards document so they are more visible to members of the public. No change to the current practice is proposed.
18. Through encouragement of the use of the website it is hoped to minimise visits to City Hall. However, there may still be occasions when the public and developers do need to visit City Hall and it is therefore proposed to update information about when documents are available for viewing in City Hall. There is a need to formally amend the existing service standards to match the opening times of the customer contact centre to avoid mixed messages being sent out to the public. This will result in Wednesday opening from 1pm.
19. To work towards new ways of dealing with face to face contact with the public and developers as part of the moves to re-organise the use of space in City Hall. With the widespread use of the internet there are now far fewer visitors than there used to be. Once the planning staff move to the 3rd floor in January 2013 the physical link to the reception area on the 2nd floor will be more difficult to manage and will impact on the customer contact team's service delivery. As part of the further rollout of changes in other parts of the building, notably the customer contact area on the ground floor, there is a need to promote the shift of the routine viewing of application plans to be done on-line at a high quality terminal in any new and improved public reception area. However, there will be a need to support and assist some people who are unfamiliar with a computer. Overall it is considered that this will benefit the public as they would be able to see all the information on good quality screens. It will reduce resource usage of paper and copying as well as the time in preparing public

files. However this cannot be brought into effect immediately and needs to be considered as part of the wider consideration of further physical changes and how the Council interfaces with the public within City Hall.

20. It is also proposed to clarify what the public can expect if they come to City hall in person. At present there are numerous people who do attend and responses can be ad hoc and there is lack of clarity from the public in what services they can expect to receive. It is proposed to introduce a new “duty officer” system so which will enable anyone to get advice on how to take forward their proposal or issue. This will be limited to a maximum 5 minutes of time and will enable “signposting” of the way forward which may be via a paid-for pre-application process. This service is proposed to operate until 30 minutes before City Hall closes and be available at all times that the customer contact centre is open (currently from 1pm on Wednesdays and 8.45 am on other weekdays). It will be important to make it clear that this will not involve any detailed research or investigation and is simply a service to direct people in which way they can best avail themselves of the council’s services.
21. In respect of enforcement matters many cases can either be dealt with quickly following a site visit and initial investigation or can take many weeks or months to resolve. In the latter case the existing service standard will be amended from a contact at week 3 (by which time there is little progress to actually report) to a more realistic commitment to have a clear contact in the 9th week for any outstanding case. This should help to manage expectations and therefore improve the customer experience of the enforcement arrangements for complex cases.
22. The finally published version of the new service standards could also include additional information so that the public can see, in one document, the way in which the development management service operates. At present some of these matters are in other published documents (e.g. the planning code of conduct) and may be difficult to find. This would include, for example, information on who is consulted on planning applications (the neighbour notification policy), and procedures for speaking at planning applications committee. This will assist the public by making the information available in one place.

Discretionary charges

Pre-application charging

23. New options for alternative methods of providing pre-application advice are proposed which will give developers, agents and landowners a number of options and is intended to be more customer focussed. Experience has shown that a “one size fits all” approach is not necessarily appropriate for all cases and the proposal is to create a more flexible system appropriate to the needs of different types of enquiry. It is proposed to operate a tiered level of service ranging from:
 - a) pre-application meeting;
 - b) basic enquiry;
 - c) intermediate enquiry;
 - d) advanced enquiry;
 - e) post approval feedback, amendment or variations.

Further details of these various options are detailed in Appendix 1. The main differences proposed from the current approach are summarised below.

Viability

24. A new fee is proposed for time spent by staff in negotiating and agreeing viability matters on sites where there are non-compliant affordable housing proposals. This can take considerable amounts of staff time and directly relates to additional work for some types of applications. It is considered to be reasonable to charge additional fees for this service. This could be based on actual hours expended but this is likely to be complex and time consuming to account on an individual application basis. As the costs of advice from external specialists are a good proxy for the complexity of the issues raised it is proposed to base fees on those costs. It is considered that 50% of the external costs of specialist valuation/chartered surveyor advice would be reasonable as supplement for the City Council staff input. For some small scale and simpler cases there is no external evaluation and in these cases a fee of £500 will be charged for the additional staff time. The actual time expended will be monitored over a six month period to measure it is fixed at the right level and appropriate adjustments made thereafter.
25. Estimates of fee income are difficult to forecast. In a full year £5,000 may be expected

Refunds

26. At present many applications are submitted only partially complete and are held as "invalid". Advice is given to the applicant and if the documentation remains incomplete after 28 days documents may be returned and any fees paid refunded. This process is costly and should be unnecessary if developers and agents are following the published validation checklist guidelines. The process of refunding monies is expensive and takes staff time. Documentation has to be returned to the applicant. In future it is proposed to charge an administration fee of £50 if an application is returned due to errors and omissions by the applicant /agent to cover staff time, finance charges and postage.
27. This fee should encourage improved practices by agents and is estimated to generate £1,000 in a full year.

Proposed planning service standards

Planning services – what we do

The planning service makes high quality, sustainable and appropriate development possible in Norwich as well as maintaining and improving the city's natural and built environment by:

- determining all forms of planning and other related applications;
- delivering a Local Development Framework and planning policy;
- protecting and enhancing conservation areas and listed buildings;
- providing general planning and related advice to the public;
- making and reviewing tree preservation orders;
- dealing with tree applications;
- dealing with planning appeals;
- planning enforcement in conjunction with public protection staff.

Our customers

Our customers include people applying for planning permission or making comments on applications or plans, businesses, councillors, other services within the council, statutory bodies and interest groups. More indirectly everyone who lives in, works in or visits Norwich is affected by the outcome of the planning service.

Our responsibilities to you

When dealing with planning issues there are some things we can and cannot take into account. How we do this must be open to public scrutiny. Whenever and however you contact us, we will:

- listen;
- treat you with dignity, courtesy and respect for your confidentiality;
- provide easily understood information when you need it;
- give you our names;
- tell you what we are doing and why;
- provide the best possible service and take the time to get it right first time, every time;
- respect you and respond to differing needs because of age, disability, ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

Your responsibilities to us

We would like you to:

- provide us with the information we need and inform us if it changes;
- let us know if you cannot attend an appointment and who will be attending;
- show us respect and courtesy.

Measure of success

Positive customer feedback.

Method of monitoring

Customer satisfaction surveys.

How we will respond to you – our service standards

Telephone

When you phone us, we will:

- answer your call as quickly as possible;
- respond to telephone messages within one working day.

Letter and email

- If you contact us by letter or email, we will:
- answer your letter or email within 14 days, or
- send an acknowledgement within five working days and respond within four weeks.

There are separate service standards regarding pre-application advice.

Visit us

We operate a duty officer system from 9am - 4.30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and on Wednesdays between 1pm - 4.30pm (except when City Hall is closed on public holidays and the week between Christmas and New Year). You can speak to a planning or senior technical officer in person or via the telephone for a maximum five minute period for general advice. This will not involve any research, detailed investigation or advice on the acceptability or not of a proposal but is aimed at providing general advice and assist you by signposting the way forward. This may be via the free or paid for pre-application service.

The duty officer would generally be a planning officer or senior technician who addresses any queries which cannot be addressed by the planning customer service team. The time available for each person will be limited to 5 minutes and customers may need to wait to see the duty officer.

Visit you

If it is impossible for you to get to City Hall because of a disability the same “duty officer” service is available to you to meet a planner at any address within Norwich. In addition if you wish to view details of an application and you cannot get to City Hall and you do not have access to the internet, then details of the proposal can be sent to you by post or you can be met at an address within Norwich.

Measure of success

Positive customer feedback.
Time periods for acknowledging and response.

Method of monitoring

Customer satisfaction surveys.
Learning from feedback we have received through the comments, compliments and complaints process.
Sample survey of correspondence responses.

Planning applications

When you submit a planning application or an application to discharge a planning condition we will:

- register it, acknowledge it and let you know who will be dealing with your application within seven days, or
- if the application is invalid we will let you know what you need to do within seven days

After an application is formally registered we will decide it as quickly as we can. We aim to decide:

- minor applications within eight weeks;
- major applications within thirteen weeks.

If we cannot meet these targets we will let you know why.

If we are unlikely to meet these targets then by the end of the 7th week (12th week for majors) then we will ask you whether you wish the council to continue to negotiate a positive outcome or whether you wish the application to be determined as it stands.

We will publish details of all applications including drawings, consultee comments, officer delegated and committee reports and subsequent decisions on our website. The website will also allow an easy method of commenting on applications.

If you comment on an application we will acknowledge your comments, advise you of the possible future committee dates and explain how you can view the agenda, the report, your rights to speak at committee and how you can view the final decision notice.

Once a planning decision has been taken we will:

- issue a decision letter within five days of the decision date, unless a planning obligation remains to be signed
- notify those who have made a representation within three days of the decision.

We will also:

- publish on our website a list of planning applications that we have received and decisions we have made weekly;
- provide full details of conditions on a permission or reasons for refusal at our offices and on our website;
- continue to maintain and update the planning services website to keep users informed about our service and any changes to procedures;
- regularly review our approach to keeping people informed about planning applications.

Measure of success

Meeting targets set in relation to the speed of dealing with planning applications. Targets will be updated annually via the annual service plan process.

Method of monitoring

National Indicator 157 and others to be determined in annual service plan.

Pre-application advice

We encourage people to contact us before submitting planning applications. The details of the various services we offer at pre-application stage are described in the appendix.

Planning enforcement

If you complain about someone breaching planning rules we will assess and classify the urgency of this within a day.

We will acknowledge emailed queries immediately and letters within four calendar days.

We will advise complainants of the outcome of investigations within 7 days of a decision or, if 8 weeks have elapsed (and in the 9th week), to advise of progress.

Service comments, compliments and complaints

The council has a corporate policy relating to comments, compliments and complaints about services— click on ‘complaints’ on our website. If you are unhappy with our service we would like to know as comments, compliments and complaints help us to improve our services.

Website

If you want to use our website at www.norwich.gov.uk we will:

- aim for the site to be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- give you the chance to view and comment on current planning applications and consultations online.

Other useful information

Visiting us at City Hall Planning reception

Planning reception, on the second floor of City Hall, is open from 8.45am to 5pm Monday to Friday. On Wednesdays the opening hours are 1pm-5pm

Here you can:

- view details of planning applications which are being dealt with or have been determined;
- view planning decision notices and Section 106 agreements (planning obligations);
- pick up the forms you need to apply for planning permission and find out basic information about the planning service;
- drop off completed forms and applications.

Building Regulations

Building Control services, including all aspects of the Building Regulations are provided on behalf of the council by CNC Building Control. Please contact them direct if you have any queries:

CNC Building Control

Thorpe Lodge

1 Yarmouth Road

NORWICH

NR7 ODU

t: 01603 430100

e: enquiries@cncbuildingcontrol.gov.uk

f: 01603 430541

For more information about building control in Norwich and applications forms for work visit the CNC Building Control website. www.cncbuildingcontrol.gov.uk

If you wish to contact Norwich City Council's planning services, please:

Visit our website at

www.norwich.gov.uk

telephone

0344 980 3333 (8am to 6pm,
Monday to Friday)

minicom

01603 212587 (8am to 6pm,
Monday to Friday)

fax

01603 213015

email

planning@norwich.gov.uk

Write to:

Planning Services

Norwich City Council

City Hall

Norwich

NR2 1NH

Visit us:

8.45am - 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

1pm - 5pm Wednesday

2nd Floor

City Hall

Norwich

NR2 1NH

Duty officers are available until 4.30pm , to allow for time to deal with queries before City Hall closes (and from 1pm on Wednesdays)

Pre-application planning advice

The Council strongly encourages developers and agents to engage with the planning service at an early opportunity. This will give you the best information on which to base your proposal and enable any planning application that is subsequently made to have the best chance of success. However, it will not be possible to provide a high quality advice service in all cases unless additional resources are available without charging for advice. This service is part of the Council's way of working with applicants in a positive and proactive manner and delivering pre-application advice in accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (paras 186-192) Paragraph 188 states that "early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties".

Levels of Pre-Application Service**Free Advice**

Free advice is limited to verbal advice on the phone or via a duty officer at City Hall. Such free advice and signposting of how to take the query forward through other channels is limited to a five minute discussion. If the enquiry is not a simple enquiry and cannot be addressed in that time it will be necessary for the customer to utilise one of the paid for services..

Listed Building Advice

Only where there is no associated planning application i.e. proposals are internal and/or minor external changes which do not require planning permission. Advice provided directly by conservation staff.

Response Time: 21 days

Tree Advice

Where the works relate solely to trees protection via a TPO or Conservation Area.
Advice provided directly by the Council's Tree Protection Officer

Response Time: 21 days

Paid for Advice.

50% reduction for charities and community groups providing services to the whole community and relating to the local provision of that service.

No fee for developments solely relating to disabled access or householder alterations.

No charge for council proposals, unless being disposed of for commercial or RSL development in which case normal charges apply. VAT will be added to all costs where the work undertaken is not a statutory requirement. All response times relate to calendar days.

Do I need planning permission?

Customers are advised to utilise the web site to answer their query.

Householders are advised to submit an application for a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) where they are confident that their proposal is permitted development and so that a formal decision can be issued. Customers can request written advice on the need for planning permission by filling in an online form and paying a lower fee although the formal LDC is the statutory process which may be useful in the future if you sell your house and queries are raised by a potential purchaser.

Fee: £50

Response Time: 21 days

Planning History

To provide a planning history of the site (a list of relevant applications) and copies of the decision notice.

Fee:

Planning history and up to two decision notices £65

If this is particularly complex this will be the actual time expended at a rate of £65/hour.

Copy of S106 or TPO £21

Copy of documents on file £65 per hour

Additional decision notices £10.50 each

Response Time: 21 days

Householder Pre-application Advice

For householder development, written advice can be requested using an online form.

Fee: £50

Response Time: 21 days

Change of Use Pre-Application Advice

For change of use only or with very minor external alterations (i.e. amended shop front). Written advice can be requested using an online form.

Fee: £150

Response Time: 21 days

Minor Commercial Development Pre-Application Advice

For minor commercial developments or extensions of no more than 1,000sqm gross floor space. Written advice can be requested using an online form.

Fee: £80 per 75sqm

Response Time: 21 days

Significant Development Proposals

This applies to developments of 1 dwelling or more or 1000sqm gross floorspace or more, or a combination of the two. Four levels of service are suggested.

Developers can progress through each level with any fee paid for the earlier level of service discounted from the latter level subject to it being within 6 months of the original advice being given and being for the same proposal. Developers can seek advice at any starting level from the outset subject to sufficient information being provided and do not need to start at level 1.

Level 1

Pre-Application Meeting

An initial meeting to discuss the parameters of likely future pre-application discussions. Officers will give limited feedback on the merits of proposals but may indicate if something appears to be far from being in line with policy or alternatively

broadly in line with policy and suitable to proceed through the pre-application process. E-mail with very brief summary of meeting provided (not full minutes).

Fee: £60

Response Time: 14 days.

Level 2

Basic Enquiry

To provide advice only on the principle of the development and no other matters. Information provided by the applicant would be a description of the proposals including proposed uses and numbers of dwellings or floorspace and possibly a site plan. Applicants may wish to submit a sequential or impact assessment for main town centre uses where they are aware that this may be an issue. No internal or external consultation would take place. The officer response would outline relevant policy, constraints, the acceptability of the principle of development and other main issues (as bullet points only e.g. design, trees, contamination etc). This can include the earlier stage of a pre-meeting.

Fee: £125

Additional charge of £250

This would apply if the applicant has submitted a main town centre uses sequential and/or impact assessment and is seeking detailed feedback.

Response Time: 21 days

5 weeks where detailed feedback on a sequential or impact assessment is required.

Level 3

Intermediate Enquiry

This goes a step further than the basic enquiry and would require submission of a full set of plans and other supporting information. Feedback would be provided on all areas of the proposal within the remit of the information provided. Internal consultations would be carried out however the applicant would be advised to approach external consultees themselves for advice. The need to screen the development under the EIA regulations should also be considered. This can include the earlier stage of a pre-meeting.

Fee: 20% of the likely full application fee subject to a min of £250

Response Time 6 weeks

Level 4

Advanced Enquiry

This goes a step further than the intermediate enquiry. It is intended that this level can be more flexible and involve ongoing correspondence between the Council and

the applicant, including providing the applicant with opportunities to submit revisions to respond to initial comments.

The council would also undertake external consultations where the necessary information has been submitted (e.g. if a Flood Risk Assessment submitted consult the Environment Agency).

For larger proposals the applicant would also be invited to present proposals to the Design Review Panel. Also for larger proposals the LPA can assist with the content of pre-application public consultations.

Environmental Impact Assessment screening would normally be undertaken as part of the process.

This is the only level of enquiry where development viability could be looked at and where this is an issue a further charge will be levied. Clearly such charges can be included as a cost within the viability appraisal.

Fee: 30% of the likely full application fee subject to a min of £750

£1,000 additional charge over and above the 30% fee where the applicant wishes the LPA to consider development viability. Further charges may apply where the LPA needs external surveyor advice.

Response Time: 8 weeks, plus time to consider any amendments.

Post Approval Feedback, Amendments or Variations

This process seeks to deal with queries post approval or informal queries relating to amendments or variations. Where such queries cannot be addressed via the duty planner customers can request written advice by filling in an online form.

Fee: £80

Response Time 21 days

Post Refusal Feedback

This process seeks to deal with queries post refusal, in general where the applicant did not enter into pre-application discussions prior to submission. In this case the applicant can seek advice on a resubmission for a set fee by filling in an online form. This can involve an initial meeting with the case officer to discuss how the scheme could be amended.

Fee: £250

Response Time: 21 days

Large scale and complex major applications

For large scale proposals the standard ways of dealing with pre-application advice may not be achievable or desirable. As part of an additional service to developers a potential timetable for submission, consultation, amendment, re-consultation can be agreed (similar to a Planning Performance Agreement). An estimate will be made of the

Council's total costs and a fee quoted. Actual time expended will be measured and actual costs will be paid either by refund or by supplementary estimate. Time recording of all DM staff time will be made (estimates for others) the frequency of meetings and a timetable for determination will be agreed. If unforeseen items crop up during the processing of the application then further charges will be payable dependent on the actual staff time involved. The minimum fee would be £5,000 and a minimum of £2,500 would be payable on commencement.

Refunds for poor service

If the council fails to meet the performance standards in respect of paid pre-application advice and there is no fault or delay caused by the applicant then 50 per cent of any fee paid will be refunded.

It should be stressed that although all advice will be issued in good faith it cannot constitute a formal decision of the council and will not, in any way prejudice the council's consideration of any subsequent application. The nature of advice given will be considered relevant to any subsequent planning application so will be in the public domain at that time although it is likely to have to be made available if a relevant Freedom of Information request is made.

Additional items

Viability

In addition further charges will be made for additional work that is necessary if planning applications are not policy compliant and viability needs to be assessed. This can take considerable amounts of staff time and it is considered to be reasonable to charge additional fees for this service. As the costs of advice from external specialists are a good proxy for the complexity of the issues raised it is proposed to base fees on those costs. 50% of the external costs of specialist valuation/chartered surveyor advice would be reasonable as a supplement for the City Council staff input in this viability work. For some small scale and simpler cases there is no need for external evaluation and in these cases a fee of £500 will be charged for the additional staff time expended.

Refunds

At present many applications are submitted only partially complete and are held as "invalid", often for extended periods of time. Advice is given to the applicant about how to make the application valid and if the documentation remains incomplete after 28 days they may be returned and any fees paid refunded. The refund process is time consuming, costly and should be unnecessary if developers and agents are following the published validation requirements. An administration fee of £50 will be deducted from the fee submitted if an application is returned due to the application being invalid only due to errors or omissions by the applicant /agent. This will cover the staff time, internal finance charges and postage of any hard copy of documents submitted.

Copy documents

Planning histories are normally dealt with as part of a land search, however, on occasion, individuals do go direct to planning services for the planning history element

only. In such cases there is a need to clarify and regularise charging so that it is consistently applied. It is proposed to charge a minimum fee of £50 per history search (or the actual cost if higher) and £10.50 per copy of a planning permission (to match Land Charges fees). In a full year this change may generate £500

Note all reference to charges are likely to be subject to VAT as the services are discretionary and not a statutory function.

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report

Detailed guidance to help with completing the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	12 th December 2012
Head of service:	Graham Nelson, Head of Planning
Report subject:	Planning – development management – service standards and discretionary charging
Date assessed:	29 th November, 2012
Description:	Revision of published service standards and approach to discretionary charging. The intention is to increase the range of services that are charged for and the level of charge made to cover a greater proportion of the costs of providing advice. Some exemptions to charges are proposed to avoid adverse impact on vulnerable groups.

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Will increase income to the Council.
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small number of additional queries to customer contact querying the agendas of future Planning Applications Committee for those without internet access. However, in practice, most enquirers would use the direct line contact of case officer which they would have.
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whilst increasing the costs of development in some cases the information gathered may reduce abortive time and cost by the applicant. the proposed structuring of the services provides an opportunity for applicants to choose the level , and cost, of service appropriate to their needs
Financial inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Though this is minimal as these costs are a very small part of the overall building costs of development.
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and well being	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Certain exemptions are proposed as specified in para 11 of the report
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Recommendations from impact assessment
Positive
Negative
Neutral
Issues