

**Budget Savings Proposals
Full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)**

Section 1: General Information

<p>1a) Name of the savings proposal Review of Planning Fees Income</p> <p>1b) Service area Planning and Building Control, Development and Renewal</p> <p>1c) Service manager Owen Whalley</p> <p>1d) Name and role of the officer/s completing the EQIA Pete Smith <i>Development Manager</i> David Williams <i>Deputy Service Head, Planning and Building Control</i></p>	<p>Item Ref. No: IO/2</p>
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Section 2: Information about changes to services

2a) In brief please explain the savings proposals and the reasons for this change

This proposal projects an increase in Planning Application fees and charges which would enable a net saving to be generated against the cost of providing the planning application service.

Planning application fee income is dependent on the state of the development market and has recently come under pressure in a tough economic climate.

Most planning fees and charges have been set nationally by Government since 1980 and the Council is bound to operate under these fees. The fees are based on a national assessment of overall cost of handling, administering and deciding applications including related overheads.

The Government is now consulting local authorities on a new proposal to decentralise the responsibility for setting planning application fees, including fee categories in England. "Proposals for changes to planning application fees (November 2010)".

In effect it proposes to let local authorities determine their own charges on a non-profit making basis. This will allow local authorities to charge for some applications which do not require a fee and to set fees which should be based more closely on costs.

In addition, Development and Renewal has taken the opportunity to review its current approach to planning charges which are not set nationally. These include pre-application fees, charging for impact assessment work and other charges for contact with Planning and Building Control.

The figure of £250,000 per annum represents a best estimate at this time of the impact of a localised fee setting regime. It considers the likelihood of the economy operating at its current level and builds in an increase in those fees and the charges which the authority can already set. In year 1, 2011/12, this includes both a part year effect of the national changes to planning fees, as well as full year effect for those charges where there is already local discretion. In exploring whether additional income may be achieved in future years, consideration has to be given to: the likelihood of whether business volume will remain stable, increase or

decrease; an understanding of what impact localism will have on a local communities response to development pressures; identification of other creative approaches to local fee setting and assessing the impact of fee changes in 11-12.

2b) What are the equality implications of your proposal?

All savings proposals have been screened for equalities relevance using the test of relevance questionnaire attached at Appendix A. Please go back to each of the test of relevance questions and **using evidence** please provide a more detailed analysis of the equality impact of your proposal.

The proposal to increase Planning Application fee and Income will:

- 1. Alter or change access to the service – it will make the services offered more costly**
- 2. Involve revenue raising – it's purpose is to raise revenue**
- 3. Involve a redesign of the roles of staff – very limited additional elements**

1. Alter or Change Access. Access to the service will be the same; it will remain be accessible for all, but the cost of the service will increase as measures are introduced to optimise income e.g. an increase in planning application fees.
2. Involves Revenue Raising. The nature of the proposal is intended to raise revenue. All applicants may have to pay more and a charge may be introduced for currently free services. The increase in, or application of, fees will, it is considered, represent an insignificant proportion of total development costs.

This proposal will not affect accessibility to the service but it is anticipated it will increase costs for applicants and introduce more services for which applications will need to be made. However, it is considered this will have no significant equalities impacts. The over-whelming majority of users of the planning application service are not from low-income households and they are not predominantly accessed by any one community in the Borough. The Borough does have resident householders who submit planning applications to extend or convert their properties but these are usually property owners who are not generally identified as low-income households. The wider development industry is active in the Borough from local businesses and developers building a few flats to volume house builders and the commercial development industry. The development industry will be largely unaffected by marginal planning application fee increases. It is not a key element of any decision to proceed with development proposals, so is not thought to have any impact on the overall level of development that comes through the process.

Any concessionary or exemption based approach is not deemed appropriate. Statutory exemptions will remain unaffected.

3. Involve a re-design of roles of some staff. This is largely a bureaucratic change and as such will have a minimal affect on the roles of staff. In effect additional charges and categories will be added to fee charging lists and the operation of these will still be undertaken by administrative staff supporting technical officers in Development and Renewal. These Officers will need short familiarisation sessions in the new charges and providing with any amended guidance that accompanies their introduction. If training was considered appropriate then it would be provided.

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment

With reference to the analysis above, for each of the equality strands in the table below please record and evidence your conclusions around equality impact in relation to the savings proposal.

<p>Race</p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different racial groups.</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on specific ethnic groups? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>The planning application service is largely accessed by developers and property owners. No one specific ethnic group would be adversely impacted through an increase in application fee's it would apply to all.</p> <p>More detailed information on property ownership by ethnic group be it householder or private developer is not held by Development and Renewal.</p>
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<p>Disability</p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different disability groups</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on disabled people? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>There is no detailed information on whether an applicant is disabled but it is not thought that they significantly access the service more than anyone else.</p>
<p>Gender</p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different gender groups (inc Trans) groups</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on men or women? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>There is no relevant information which identifies a specific gender as a significant user of the service. It is not considered relevant in this instance whether an applicant is male, female or trans gender. All are treated in a neutral way through the planning fee process.</p>

<p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on members of the LGB community</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on lesbian, gay or bisexual people? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest one category or other is a more prominent user of the service. As such the sexual orientation of an applicant is not considered relevant in this instance. All are treated in a neutral way through the planning fee process.</p>
<p>Religion and Belief</p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different religious and faith groups</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on people who practice a religion or belief? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that one religion or belief is a more significant user of the service. The religion or beliefs of an applicant is not considered relevant in this instance. All are treated in a neutral way through the planning fee process.</p>

<p>Age</p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different age groups using the prompts above</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on specific age groups? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that age is a factor in the use of the service. The age an applicant is not considered relevant in this instance. All are treated in a neutral way through the planning fee process.</p>
<p>Socio-economic</p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy in relation to socio-economic inequalities</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on people with low incomes? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>The Planning and Building Control section of Development and Renewal has no evidence to show that people with low-incomes are significant users of the planning application service.</p>

<p>Other</p> <p><i>Identify if there are groups, other than those already considered, that may be adversely affected by the policy?</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on any other people (e.g. carers)? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No</p> <p>The planning application service is accessed by the development industry, business and individual householders who wish to make an application under planning legislation or wish to use a service offered by the Council in connection with this process.</p>
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<p>Staff</p> <p><i>Identify if there are any staff groups, , that may be adversely affected by the policy?</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on staff? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>No</p> <p>Any increase in planning application fee's will not negatively impact on staff. Some existing processes will need to accommodate increased categories and charges already managed by staff will need revising but no other significant impacts are identified.</p> <p>If the cost of the service provided is better met through the fee process then this may have a positive effect in that it could stabilise staff employment and make the service more resilient to funding cuts.</p>
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Section 4: Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please list in the table below any adverse impact identified and, where appropriate, steps that could be taken to mitigate this impact.

If you consider it likely that your proposal will have an adverse impact on a particular group (s) and you cannot identify steps which would mitigate or reduce this impact, you will need to demonstrate that you have considered at least one alternative way of delivering the change which has less of an adverse impact.

Adverse impact	Please describe the actions that will be taken to mitigate this impact
N/A	

If an adverse impact cannot be mitigated please describe an alternative option, its costs and the equality impact.

Section 5: Future Review and Monitoring

Please explain how and when the actual equality impact of these changes will be reviewed and monitored.

Any new fee's and/or charges are likely to be introduced in phases throughout 2011-12.

The Planning and Building Control service will monitor levels of business and will review on a monthly basis the impact increased fees and charges is having on the level of business coming through the service. There is already a duty on the local authority to monitor and report its planning activity. More detailed monitoring on client groups while it may identify some interesting information is not considered to be necessary in specifically helping to identify equalities impacts as service access is not generally affected by such things as fee levels (they are a very small proportion of the overall cost of development). The main impact on planning activity will most likely be more macro economic considerations such as the state of the economy.

APPENDIX A: Equality Impact Assessment Test of Relevance

TRIGGER QUESTIONS	YES / NO	IF YES PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN.....
<p>Does the change reduce resources available to address inequality?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What outcome did the previous intervention seek to achieve? • What evidence do you have about how effective the previous intervention was?
CHANGES TO A SERVICE		
<p>Does the change alter access to the service?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence that access will be more difficult or costly for some people?
<p>Does the change involve revenue raising?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence do we have about who will pay? • What impact will this have on the income available for these people?
<p>Does the change alter who is eligible for the service?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence do we have about who will no longer be eligible for the service? • Is this likely to lead to poorer outcomes for those who cannot access the service?

Does the change involve a reduction or removal of income transfers to service users?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence do we have on who has benefits from these transfers? • What is the likely impact of the removal of the income to current beneficiaries?
Does the change involve a contracting out of a service currently provided in house?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a need to include promotion of equality in the new contract arrangements?
CHANGES TO STAFFING		
Does the change involve a reduction in staff?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence do we have about the composition of the current workforce? • Are there some groups who are likely to be disproportionately affected by the proposed reduction?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence is there that this could have an impact on equal pay?

Does the change involve a redesign of the roles of staff?		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the change reduce the ability of staff to work flexibly?
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