

To: City Executive Board
Date: 12 February 2019
Report of: Acting Head of Planning Services
Title of Report: Implementation of administration fee for processing invalid applications that are returned to the applicant

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek agreement for the implementation of an administration fee for those invalid applications returned to the applicant.
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Planning and Transport
Corporate Priority:	
Policy Framework:	Validation Strategy for Planning Services
Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the implementation of an administration fee for processing invalid applications that are returned to the applicant; and 2. Delegate to the Acting Head of Planning Services the authority to set the level of administration charge and time limit by which the charge should be sought for the respective invalid applications. 	

Introduction and background

1. The Planning Service is developing a validation strategy in order to refine the validation process and consequently the customer experience of submitting planning applications.
2. There has been a significant increase in the submission of invalid planning applications received in 2018. An application is considered to be invalid when it is missing the required level of information to enable determination of the application. An invalid application has a negative impact on the planning service in terms of resource and capacity, as it requires a double handling of the validation process, and also customer experience in terms of delaying the determination of a customer's application.
3. The validation strategy being developed is seeking to streamline the process and make it clearer for applicants to understand the level of information required to make it right at time of submission. However through this work, it

has been identified that it is important to discourage the submission of invalid applications, particularly from those who regularly submit planning applications (i.e. planning agents, architects, etc). This would be achieved through the implementation of an administration fee for processing invalid applications that are returned to the applicant.

Other Implications

4. It is considered that the implementation of an administration charge would improve the planning service by reducing the total number of invalid applications received in the service and increasing capacity within the applications team to validate planning applications in a more efficient manner which in turn has a benefit to the customer experience.
5. The charge would be supported by other changes to the validation process, such as website improvements, updated national and local list of submission requirements, further training of agents and staff to provide a more streamlined system.
6. There would be no other implications from the implementation of the charge.

Financial implications

7. The fees have been set following a benchmarking exercise of other authorities who have set similar administrative charges.
8. The charge would be levied for any application which is made invalid and where the additional information requested is not submitted within the required timeframe (e.g. 2 weeks). In these cases the application will be returned and the following administration charge will be deducted from the planning fee refund
 - Major Applications - £100
 - Minor & Other Applications - £75
 - Householder - £50
9. The administration charge is intended to discourage the submission of invalid applications, and has been set at a rate that would only seek to recover the administration cost of processing the invalid application.

Legal issues

10. There are no legal implications from the implementation of the charge.

Level of risk

11. The only level of risk associated within the implementation of the charge would be adverse publicity from applicants or agents who are subject to a charge.
12. It is considered that this risk will be managed through an external communications strategy setting out the introduction and rationale for the charge, wider changes to the validation process, and further training made available for applicants / agents to encourage the submission of valid applications

Equalities impact

13. The administration charge would not give rise to any Equalities Impacts.

Conclusion

14. Therefore for the reasons set out above, the implementation of the administration charge for invalid applications is considered to be an important part of the refined validation process.

Report author	Andrew Murdoch
Job title	Acting Development Management Service Manager
Service area or department	Development Management, Planning Services
Telephone	01865 252228
e-mail	amurdoch@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

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