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| Subject: | Pre-Application Discussions – Scale of Charging |
| Date: | 13 th December 2016 |
| Reporting Officer: | Phil Williams, Director of Planning and Place |
| Contact Officer: | Ed Baker, Development Engagement Manager |

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| Is this report restricted? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of report or summary of main issues |
| 1.1 | The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee’s agreement to the draft Scale of Charging for Pre-Application Discussions. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | The Committee is asked to agree the draft Scale of Charging for Pre-Application Discussions found at Appendix 1 with a view to informal consultation with stakeholders, including agents, developers and landowners. |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| 3.1 | <u>Background</u> At its meeting of 18 th October, the Committee agreed that the Director of Planning & Place should investigate a Scale of Charging for Pre-Application Discussions (“PADS”). The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (“SPPS”), adopted September 2015, recognises that PADS are ‘... <i>fundamental to ‘front loading’ the new development management system. This front loading will help all parties, both to prepare an application to a high standard and to establish an agreed course and timetable for determining a development proposal</i> ’. |

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| | <p>Development Management Practice Note 10 - Pre-Application Community Consultation recognises that the pre-application process is not a statutory requirement and is optional. However, by facilitating effective and meaningful pre-application discussions, a Council can ensure that opportunities to work collaboratively with applicants and to improve the quality of developments are maximised.</p> <p>Many local planning authorities, including UK Core Cities, utilise this approach for strategic, major, and other forms of development, and charge for this service. Example charging rates by other Cities is provided in the table at Appendix 1.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Belfast is facing an unprecedented level of growth where the development pipeline includes very significant commercial and employment generating developments. The Council is committed to encouraging quality developments in the capital city of Northern Ireland.</p> <p>To support applicants investing in such developments the Council needs to provide certainty and sufficient resources to ensure that planning applications for large scale, complex and other types of proposal are dealt with in a timely manner. It is therefore necessary to introduce a charging for the PAD service.</p> <p>The recommended charging rate is set out at Appendix 1. The charging rate has been set to recover staff and administrative costs associated with servicing a PAD. Based on the number of PADS received over the last 12 months, the Council would have received around £80,000 (excluding payments for additional meetings) had charging for PADS already been in place.</p> <p>Given that this is a new and developing service, it is recommended that the Council does not charge for PADS in relation to householder developments, Listed Buildings (unless associated with a change of use), Conservation Area Consents and Advertisements. It is further recommended that there is no charge for PADS in relation to community proposals. The Duty Planner service will remain available for members of the public who wish to discuss proposals such as domestic extensions and alterations. This is a free service.</p> <p>In introducing charges for PADS, the planning service will need to provide clarity around the role of pre-application advice, how the process works and what minimum level of information required from applicants to ensure meaningful discussions.</p> |

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| 3.3 | <p><u>Next stage</u></p> <p>The next stage will be to informally consult on the Scale of Charging with customers, including agents, developers and landowners. It is expected that this will be done by way of a stakeholder workshop, which will discuss the Scale of Charging and Pre-Application Discussion process generally. Feedback from the workshop will be reported to the Committee, alongside draft guidance on the PAD process, so that the Committee can make a final decision on the Scale of Charging for the PAD process.</p> |
| 3.5 | <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Charging for Pre-Application Discussions is an important income stream that will support the delivery of this vital part of the planning service.</p> |
| 3.6 | <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> |
| 4.0 | <p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> |
| 4.1 | <p>Appendix 1 – Proposed Charging Schedule for Pre-Application Discussions</p> |