

# Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday, 15 May 2019

## Changes to the pre-application advice service and Edinburgh Planning Concordat

Executive/routine	
Wards	All
Council Commitments	<a href="#">4, 10, 14, 15 and 50</a>

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- 1.1.1 agrees that the proposed changes to the Council's pre-application advice service and the proposed charges for providing pre-application advice be implemented from 1 July 2019;
  - 1.1.2 agrees that a follow-up report be brought to Planning Committee within six months of the implementation date; and
  - 1.1.3 agrees the changes to the Edinburgh Planning Concordat; and
  - 1.1.4 agrees that approval of recommendation 1.1.3 is subject to engagement with the Edinburgh Development Forum and the Edinburgh Civic Forum and inclusion of agreed amendments to the Planning Concordat.

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## Changes to the pre-application advice service and Edinburgh Planning Concordat

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report proposes changes to the pre-application advice service the Council provides to customers in advance of their making a planning application. In response to feedback from consultation with stakeholders, several reforms to deliver an improved service are proposed. To help deliver this improved service, it is proposed to introduce charges set to cover the costs of providing pre-application advice. This report also proposes changes to the Edinburgh Planning Concordat.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 Pre-application advice (PAA) refers here to advice given to a prospective applicant before a planning application has been submitted. The nature of this advice can range from a brief assessment of the likely acceptability of proposals to detailed discussions on matters such as background information required to support an application, developer contributions and consultees. The Council has reviewed the way in which it provides PAA with a view to improving the quality of the service received by applicants. This review has been informed by in-depth consultation with customers, Planning staff and other internal and external stakeholders, the results of which are summarised in Section 7.
- 3.2 The provision of PAA by planning and other officers is set in a broader context of advice and guidance for developers in Edinburgh. On a self-service basis, PAA is available through the extensive planning policies and guidance available on the Council's website. For the more complex development proposals, and particularly those with a potentially significant contribution to make to the regeneration and urban expansion of the city, PAA includes advice from the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel and from the Development Management Sub-Committee (pre-application reports) on issues to be considered when final proposals are being prepared. This review does not propose changes to these arrangements.

- 3.3 While providing PAA is not a statutory planning function, in line with Scottish Government guidance the Council provides this service to support the efficient operation of the planning system. The annual cost to the Council of providing this service in terms of Planning officers only is around £231,000 (at 2018 cost levels). In addition, specialist input is in some cases required from non-Planning staff, for example Flood Prevention, Waste, Environment, Transport, Housing, Economic Development and Archaeology. The overall costs of this input are provisionally estimated to equate to £88,573, the cost of employing two full-time grade eight employees. The total cost to the Council for providing the PAA service (at 2018 cost levels) is therefore estimated to amount to £319,573 per annum.
- 3.4 The Council has on several prior occasions explored the scope for introducing charging for the pre-application service, but to date has not opted to do so. Nine of the 32 Scottish local authorities currently charge for providing PAA on planning applications: Argyll and Bute; Dumfries and Galloway; Fife; Highland; Moray; Perth and Kinross; Scottish Borders; South Ayrshire and West Lothian. In view of current budget pressures, it is considered that to be sustainable the discretionary PAA service requires to be funded from charges.
- 3.5 The Edinburgh Planning Concordat is a document produced by the Council, the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils that sets out how the Council, developers and community councils can work together when major developments are proposed. The Concordat was originally introduced in 2010 with the most recent iteration approved by the Planning Committee on [11 August 2016](#). Among the themes of the Concordat are early engagement with communities; constructive dialogue with regards to developments complying with the Local Development Plan that are likely to be approved; and supporting the status of community councils as a statutory consultee. In recognition that the Concordat's constructive approach is applicable to more than just major development proposals, and that engagement with local communities could be improved, the Council is proposing to change the Concordat and seek agreement from the Edinburgh Civic Forum and the Edinburgh Development Forum.
- 3.6 The [Council budget for 2019/20](#) proposes that the Planning service achieve cost recovery of an additional £100,000, with the anticipation that these savings would be achieved by generating at least this amount of income via the introduction of charges for PAA. If the Planning Committee opts not to introduce charging for PAA, Planning service managers will seek to identify other means of bridging this gap. If additional income is not able to be found elsewhere then this would potentially result in the loss of approximately three to four posts from within the Planning service with significant negative implications for discretionary PAA delivery.

## 4. Main report

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### **Pre-application advice service**

- 4.1 It is proposed to change the PAA service to improve the level of customer service and standardise the offer to customers. Principles proposed to underpin the refresh of the service are set out in appendix 1. These principles include standardising the service offered across different teams within the Planning service in terms of timescales and outputs.
- 4.2 The Council does not currently offer PAA with regards to householder developments, advertising and signage, or simple changes of use/alterations on the basis that there is sufficient procedural information and policy guidance available on the Council website for prospective applicants to determine themselves whether their proposals are likely to be acceptable and how to prepare and submit a planning application. It is not proposed to change this position for the time being.
- 4.3 Key proposed principles include providing clear advice on the acceptability of all proposals on which PAA is sought, providing responses within agreed timescales and providing a consistent service across all teams within the Planning service. These principles have been informed by priorities identified during the consultation undertaken to support the proposed reform.
- 4.4 The level of service that will be provided to eligible customers in response to requests for PAA is set out in appendix 2.

### **Pre-application advice service charges**

- 4.5 To enable the Council to deliver a high-quality PAA service in the context of significant revenue budget pressures, it is proposed to introduce charges set at a level that will generate enough income *overall* to wholly offset the costs of providing the PAA service.
- 4.6 In terms of existing planning legislation, the Scottish Government has the power to make planning fee regulations to expressly allow local authorities to charge for PAA. However, the current planning fee regulations – the [Town and Country Planning \(Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2004 \(as amended\)](#) – neither make provision for charging for PAA, nor expressly prohibit it. It remains uncertain whether new planning regulations will be enacted to expressly allow local authorities to charge for PAA as part of the Scottish Government's current reform of planning law.
- 4.7 In terms of Section 20 of the [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003](#) (the "2003 Act") the Council has a general "Power to Advance Wellbeing". Section 20 of the 2003 Act provides the Council with the power to do anything which it considers likely to promote or improve the wellbeing of its area and/or people within its area, including the provision of services.

- 4.8 Having had due regard to the [2004 guidance](#) on the Power to Advance Wellbeing, it is considered that the Council has the necessary statutory power to introduce charges and recover the costs for the enhanced PAA service in terms of Section 20 of the 2003 Act, on the basis that the provision of this service will promote sustainable development and thus advance wellbeing.
- 4.9 To charge for services delivered under Section 20 of the 2003 Act, the Council must publish both its reasons for doing so and an explanation for how the specific charge amounts are derived, before it imposes them. The Council's general reasons for imposing charges are set out in this report and are summarised at para 4.5. Charges have been set based on a total cost of £319,573 (reflecting the current annual costs of delivering the PAA service to the Planning service and to other Council service areas) and an estimated annual workload of approximately 500 applications, with the charges weighted to reflect the greater level of staff time required for more complex applications. It is therefore anticipated that the charges will achieve full cost recovery basis on an aggregate basis (bespoke charges based upon the costs of delivering individual pieces of PAA are not considered to be practical due to the complexity of calculating individual costs and the lack of clarity for customers).
- 4.10 The Council received PAA requests for 27 major developments in 2018. Based on data derived from the *Costing the Planning Service* study produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy for 2018, it is estimated that the 27 major development PAA requests accounted for approximately 37.7% of the costs to the Planning service of providing PAA. 50% of the costs associated within other Council services' time have been allocated to major developments, reflecting the significantly higher input from other service areas that complex developments require. The estimated total cost of providing the current PAA service for major developments is therefore £131,373, which equates to £4,866 per PAA. The charge for providing the new PAA service for major (and national) developments (as set out in Appendix 2) has therefore been set at £4,900. A reduced service for applicants requiring only an initial meeting to discuss the concept of what they are proposing is also offered and the charges for this has been set at £1,000.
- 4.11 The Council currently on average provides PAA to 473 local developments per annum, at a total cost of approximately £188,199. These have been split into 'small' local developments and 'medium' local developments as defined in appendix 2 to reflect the greater input generally required for larger-scale local developments. The ratio of small local developments receiving PAA to medium local developments receiving PAA is currently approximately 70:30, while providing PAA for medium local developments requires, on average, around four times more work than for small local developments. Based on the 70:30 split, it is estimated that the Council would provide PAA to approximately 331 small local developments and 142 medium local developments per annum. Based on the above costs and figures, and the relevant PAA services defined at appendix 2, the charge for providing PAA for small local developments has been set at £200 and the charge for providing PAA for medium local developments has been set at £850.

4.12 A proposed schedule of charges is summarised below (please see Appendix 2 for more details):

Application type	Charge
Householder developments / advertising and signage / simple changes of use / simple alterations to listed and non-listed buildings	N/A – no PAA offered beyond free website resources.
Any development relating primarily to improving accessibility for people with disabilities	Free
Local development (small)	£200 + VAT
Local development (medium)	£850 + VAT
Major/national development	
...Pre-position meeting	£1,000 + VAT
...Full PAA service	£4,900 + VAT
Please see appendix 2 for the definitions of “local development (small)” and “local development (medium)”	

4.13 It is anticipated that these charges will be reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure they accurately reflect the costs of delivering the PAA service. Implementing charging would generate data which would enable the Council to refine charges.

4.14 In addition to these fixed charges, it is proposed to give customers the option of paying a surcharge to cover the costs of receiving supplementary services from the Council. These supplementary services include additional meetings with planning officers beyond that provided as part of the basic service. It is also proposed to give customers the option of paying a surcharge to receive other supplementary services, such as commissioning the Council to prepare economic impact assessments of their proposals. The proposed charges for these supplementary services have been calculated on the basis of the estimated cost of providing the service and they are set out in the fourth column of appendix 2. For simplicity, a flat rate of £25 per employee per hour has been used (based on the hourly salary of a grade eight employee on the lowest spinal column point multiplied by 1.25 to account for non-salary costs). Charges have been derived based on estimates of the number of employees required and the time required to provide the supplementary service. For meetings, charges reflect not only the time spent in the meeting but also the time spent arranging, preparing, following-up and (if necessary) travelling, allowing three hours for each one hour of contact time.

4.15 It is anticipated that the suite of supplementary services offered by the Council could be expanded over time and the charges refined (in which case further reports would be brought to the Planning Committee to explain the reasoning for offering further supplementary services and the proposed charges for these).

## **Edinburgh Planning Concordat**

- 4.16 The Edinburgh Planning Concordat is a simplified working document that sets out how developers, community councils and the planning authority can work together early at the pre-application stage to achieve principles of good place-making when a major or complex local development is proposed. The Concordat replaces the 2016 version with greater emphasis on the benefits of early engagement and provides a step-by-step process to engaging in a major or a complex local development. The revised Concordat is set out in Appendix 3. If Committee agrees this proposed new version, it will then be discussed at the meetings of the Edinburgh Civic Forum and Edinburgh Development Forum in June 2019, with the aim of achieving sign-off in summer 2019. It will be promoted alongside the new PAA service.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Should the Committee agree the recommendations, the Council will implement the new PAA service and begin charging from 1 July 2019.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 The charges have been set at a level which it is estimated would cover the Council's annual costs for providing the PAA service, by generating an income for the Council of approximately £319,000 per annum (if demand for PAA was consistent with that of recent years). This is equivalent to the calculated costs to the Council's Planning service of providing PAA plus the estimated costs of input from other Council service areas. As set out at 4.13, it is anticipated that these charges would be regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect the true costs to the Council.
- 6.2 It is reasonable to anticipate that the introduction of charging may deter some applicants from seeking PAA who would otherwise have done so. This would result in reduced revenue to the Council but would also reduce the costs to the Council of delivering PAA. In the longer-term, if charges from PAA are to form part of budget planning for the Planning service, consideration may require to be given as to how the Planning service cost base can be made more variable.
- 6.3 As set out in the table at 4.12, it is proposed to waive charges for PAA for any developments primarily concerning works relating to accessibility for people with disabilities. The financial impact to the Council of waiving charges in these instances is not expected to be significant. For the avoidance of doubt, it is not proposed to waive charges for PAA where offered for listed building proposals.
- 6.4 As set out at 3.6, the Council budget for 2019/20 proposes that the Planning service achieve additional cost recovery of £100,000. If this cannot be accomplished, Planning service managers will be obliged to find savings elsewhere, potentially resulting in the loss of approximately three to four posts within the Planning service.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 The Council has consulted on the proposed changes to the PAA service. An open consultation was carried out using the Consultation Hub between 6 March 2019 and 3 April 2019. The emerging themes were presented to the Edinburgh Civic Forum on 5 March 2019 and the Edinburgh Development Forum on 12 March 2019. Workshops were held with internal and external stakeholders on 18 March 2019 and 20 March 2019 respectively. The outputs of this consultation have informed the proposals set out in appendices 1 and 2.
- 7.2 90 people responded to the online consultation. Respondents generally had an unfavourable opinion of the existing PAA service, with 29% regarding it as good/very good compared to 23% regarding it as bad/very bad. 83% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that there was scope to improve the existing service. Respondents were generally supportive of the proposed changes to the PAA service, with 78% agreeing/strongly agreeing compared to 9% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. The most important aspects of the PAA service as ranked by respondents were getting a clear opinion on proposals from the planning officer, getting a response quickly, and understanding the information needed for a full application. Most respondents supported the introduction of charging for the PAA service (61% of respondents who offered an opinion one way or another) and the introduction of charges for supplementary services (56%). Respondents generally did not support exempting specific types of developments from charges with the exception of developments relating to improving provision for people with disabilities and developments by community groups and charities. A more detailed review of responses is set out in Appendix 4.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 ["The Edinburgh Planning Concordat 2016" – report to the Planning Committee, 11 August 2016](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Pre-application advice service: principles;
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – Pre-application advice service: schedule of charges and services;
- 9.3 Appendix 3 – Edinburgh Planning Concordat; and
- 9.4 Appendix 4 – Online consultation responses.

## **Appendix 1 – Pre-application advice service: principles**

- 1.1. PAA will be offered for all prospective applications with the general exceptions of (a) householder enquiries, (b) advertising and signage, (c) simple changes of use and (d) simple alterations to buildings (listed and non-listed). In these four cases, advice will be provided only in exceptional cases at the discretion of the team manager. The Council will reserve the right to decline to provide PAA at officers' discretion.
- 1.2. PAA will be provided only where customers have (a) made a formal application for PAA using the form on the Council website, (b) provided all required information upon submitting the form and (c) have paid the charge upon submitting the form.
- 1.3. Customers who do not have a material interest in the site in question will be eligible to receive PAA on the same basis as customers who do.
- 1.4. Upon receiving a valid application for PAA, the relevant team manager will identify a case officer who will remain the customer's contact for the duration of consideration of the PAA other than in unavoidable situations.
- 1.5. Where proposals involve several consents, a charge will be payable for the aspects which require planning permission. Listed building consent proposals would be classed as part of local or major proposals and included in the charge or if standalone (i.e. with no accompanying planning application) would be charged per the relevant development category. The Council will determine what charge applies.
- 1.6. The level and quality of PAA provided will be consistent across all Planning teams.
- 1.7. For the avoidance of doubt, PAA will represent only the opinion of the planning officer and team manager at that time offered without prejudice and will not at any point constitute a decision on the part of the planning authority or bind the authority to adhere to the PAA. No refunds will be issued based on the outcome of the PAA or the outcome of any subsequent planning applications.
- 1.8. Free PAA will be provided on a self-service basis via resources that customers can freely access on the Council website.
- 1.9. The basic level of chargeable PAA service that customers will be provided with is based upon the scale of their development.
- 1.10. PAA charges will be waived for any development relating primarily to improving accessibility for people with disabilities.
- 1.11. Customers will have the opportunity to pay a surcharge to access optional additional PAA services as set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.12. PAA will be provided in line with the timescales set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.13. All customers will be issued a formal written response from the relevant team manager on behalf of the Council setting out the outcomes of the PAA, to include at minimum (a) clear advice on the overall acceptability of what is being proposed based upon the information that has been provided, (b) advice on mitigating measures which could increase the acceptability of what is being proposed, (c) a list of potential developer contributions and (d) an expiration date for the advice after which it is recommended that renewed advice should be sought.

## Appendix 2 – Pre-application advice service: schedule of charges and services

Category	Charge	Basic service	Optional additional services
Householder developments / advertising and signage / simple changes of use / alterations (both listed and non-listed buildings)	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Council website-based resources to enable self-service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local development (small) service (in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the team manager) = £200 (+VAT)</li> </ul>
<b>Local development (small)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Up to 11 residential units</li> <li>▪ Up to 999m<sup>2</sup> commercial / other space</li> </ul>	£200 (+VAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Desktop review by case officer of information submitted electronically</li> <li>▪ Formal advice letter provided within 20 working days of submission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 hour face-to-face meeting with case officer = £100 (+VAT)</li> </ul>
<b>Local development (medium)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12 to 49 residential units</li> <li>▪ 1,000m<sup>2</sup> to 10,000m<sup>2</sup> commercial / other space</li> </ul>	£850 (+VAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 hour inception meeting with case officer; date to be agreed within 10 working days</li> <li>▪ 1 hour follow-up meeting with case officer</li> <li>▪ Formal advice letter provided within 10 working days of follow-up meeting (incorporating advice from relevant Council service areas)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accompanied site visit by case officer = £200 (+VAT)</li> <li>▪ Additional 1 hour meeting with case officer and other service areas = £500 (+VAT)</li> <li>▪ Support compiling information required for assessment of an application = £500 (+VAT)</li> </ul>
<b>Major/national development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 50+ residential units</li> <li>▪ 10,001m<sup>2</sup>+ commercial / other space</li> <li>▪ 2 hectares+ site size</li> <li>▪ Other criteria per the Hierarchy of Development Regulations 2009</li> </ul>	£1,000 (+VAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 hour pre-position discussion with case officer, team manager, and other relevant Council officers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ N/A</li> </ul>
	£4,900 (+VAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 hour inception meeting with case officer and team manager; date to be agreed within 10 working days</li> <li>▪ Accompanied site visit by case officer</li> <li>▪ 2 hour meeting with case officer, team manager, other relevant Council service areas, and statutory external consultees</li> <li>▪ 2 hour follow-up meeting with case officer, team manager and other service areas</li> <li>▪ 1 hour wrap-up meeting with case officer and team manager</li> <li>▪ Formal advice letter provided within 10 working days of wrap-up meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Additional 1 hour meeting with case officer, team manager, and other relevant Council officers = £500 (+VAT)</li> <li>▪ Support compiling information required for assessment of an application = £500 (+VAT)</li> <li>▪ Economic impact assessment of proposals = £500 (+VAT)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Categories include all types of planning and heritage consent applications which the proposals may be subject to. For mixed developments the highest category will apply. The final decision on applicable charges rests with the Council.</i></p>			

## Appendix 3 – Edinburgh Planning Concordat

### 1. Introduction

This Concordat is a working document which sets out how developers, community councils and the planning authority can work together early at the pre-application stage to achieve good place-making when a Major or complex Local development is proposed. This Concordat is a streamlined version of earlier concordats and relates to the Council's reformed pre-application advice service.

### 2. Why

Edinburgh is a city of growth and faces challenges to provide homes and jobs for the communities of the future. Protecting Edinburgh's heritage asset and economic profile is a key priority for years to come. In doing so, the plan-led system in Scotland is used to make decisions about the future developments of our areas and is used to balance different interests to make sure that land is used and developed in a manner that creates high quality and sustainable places to live, play and work.

It is recognised that not everyone wants change/developments in their own area and tensions can rise. However, before an application is submitted, experience has shown that when developers, communities and the planning authority work constructively together, better places can be created. Getting the balance right is difficult but important.

### 3. Concordat Benefits

For Developers

- To signal that planning is open for business
- To establish the benefits of early engagement
- To ensure expectations are managed and met

For Community Councils

- To ensure early participation in the planning process
- To reduce information and process uncertainty
- To ensure that meaningful pre-application consultation (PAC) is delivered

For Council

- To promote a culture of continuous improvement
- To demonstrate added value
- To better understand expectations

### 4. Concordat Roles

**Developers** are encouraged to promote the value of early and meaningful engagement with community councils in shaping development proposals.

**Community Councils** (CCs) are encouraged to promote the vital role in representing the views of the wider community when new developments are proposed and to work collaboratively with developers.

**Council** will promote the ways that developers and CCs can engage with each other.

*The concordat does not expect community councils to liaise with developers if the local community are fundamentally opposed to the development but expects community councils to make sure those are the views of a diverse range of local people. \**

## 5. Flow Chart of the Major or complex Local Development Process

<p><b>Pre-Application Discussion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developer complete pre-application advice form with charges payable to request an early meeting with Planning to discuss Major* or potentially complex Local proposals. Developers should provide sufficient information for initial assessment. Formal EIA screening request.</li> <li>• Developer requests an early meeting with Community Council (CC) to discuss Major* or potentially complex Local proposals</li> <li>• Developer and Council discuss <i>processing agreement</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Pre-Application Notice (PAN) Process*</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developer and CC discuss details of community consultation exercises and key dates</li> <li>• Developer submits Proposal of Application Notice (PAN)</li> <li>• Council and CC agree community consultation</li> <li>• CC to consider seeking help from the developer to engage with wider community</li> <li>• CC makes comments directly to developer and copies in Council</li> <li>• Developer to share draft Pre Application Consultation (PAC) report with CC for comment and amendments if agreed in advance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Application Submission</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developer submits planning application in line with processing agreement</li> <li>• PAC report submitted with application *</li> <li>• Developer and planning authority offer to meet CC to explain proposals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Application Processing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council automatically consults CC on a major application</li> <li>• CC to request to be a statutory consultee on a local application within 7 working days of the weekly list being issued</li> <li>• CC's comments to include review of PAC report</li> <li>• Council makes recommendation/ decision is taken (determined via Development Management Sub Committee or under the Scheme of Delegation)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Post Decision</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal agreement concluded</li> <li>• CC informed of decision</li> <li>• All parties to complete survey on the process</li> </ul>



<p><b>Possible Methods of Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Distribution of information to post code areas e.g. postcards, leaflets, brochures and mail shots.</li> <li>– Use public notice boards e.g. shop windows, GP surgeries, places of worship such as churches, community and sport facilities.</li> <li>– Websites and social media e.g. Facebook/ Twitter</li> <li>– Newspaper adverts/ articles/ radio</li> <li>– Public stalls/ street stalls</li> <li>– Public meetings, exhibitions, roadshows, workshops and focus groups.</li> </ul>
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(\* statutory requirements for major developments)

## Appendix 4 – Online consultation responses

<b>Which of the following describes you best?</b>	
Property professional (agent, architect, planning consultant, etc)	55%
Property developer	10%
Landlord	2%
Other	33%

<b>How would you rate the quality of the PAA service currently offered by the Council?</b>	
Very poor	11%
Poor	18%
Average	17%
Good	20%
Very good	3%
Inconsistent	13%
Unsure	17%

<b>To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is scope to improve the existing PAA service?</b>	
Strongly disagree	5%
Disagree	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	5%
Agree	36%
Strongly agree	49%
Unsure	6%

<b>What are your views on the proposed changes to the PAA service?</b>	
Strongly disagree	7%
Disagree	2%
Neither agree nor disagree	7%
Agree	38%
Strongly agree	42%
Unsure	5%

<b>Are there any other changes to the PAA service that you would like to see? (selected responses)</b>
<p><i>“The problem at the moment is no one has time to meet us to actually offer some pre-app advice.”</i></p> <p><i>“Continuity of advice from pre-app to final application.”</i></p> <p><i>“Advice on procedures and options should an application be deemed unacceptable at pre-app or full application.”</i></p> <p><i>“If you are going to have a strong(er) pre-application consultation with a developer, the community should be part of that consultation. If you are going to charge a fee and provide a piece of paper with written advice, then the community’s view should be there from the start.”</i></p> <p><i>“When the pre-app is done without reference to other Council departments such as Roads or Conservation this can make the discussion next to useless.”</i></p>

*"I was recently told that the Council no longer answer questions over the phone which isn't ideal for anyone situated out of town. Perhaps we could book appointments in a diary?"*

*"Pre-application advice has to have flexibility to consider a number of potential development scenarios for a site and not rule out initial ideas unduly."*

*"The planning officers need proper training and customer service skills. They need to understand the importance of taking ownership and following up with their customers."*

*"Better option might be to give initial informal advice followed up with more specific guidance once a scheme has been developed further."*

*"Confirmation of whether the principle of the proposal is acceptable should always be provided prior to then discussing the individual merits of the scheme."*

*"There is still a need to retain an informal drop in or telephone service for minor enquiries."*

*"Service should be maintained as currently run."*

*"Provide an application-specific list of documents to be included in a planning application."*

*"Providing information on the process involved in how to get proposals heard by the Urban Design Panel (point of contact/schedule of meetings)."*

*"It would be very useful to have quick advice on procedural questions (e.g. do I need planning and LBC or just LBC) by telephone and e-mail, as used to be provided by the Planning Helpdesk."*

*"An outline of a processing timetable, or draft processing agreement should be provided as part of the pre-application process."*

**To what extent do you agree with the Council not providing PAA on the following types of development where sufficient information is available on the Council website?**

	Householder developments	Advertisements and signage	Simple listed building consents	Conservation area consent (demolition)
Strongly disagree	24%	15%	21%	29%
Disagree	27%	19%	38%	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	11%	26%	14%	21%
Agree	22%	20%	18%	13%
Strongly agree	11%	13%	5%	5%
Unsure	4%	6%	5%	5%

**Thinking about the PAA service offered by the Council, how important are each of the following to you?**

	Not all at important	Not very important	Important	Very important	Unsure
Getting a clear opinion on your proposals from the planning officer	1%	0%	16%	80%	2%
Getting a response quickly	2%	4%	36%	55%	4%
Having a face-to-face meeting with the planning officer	2%	18%	35%	42%	4%
Have a meeting on-site with the planning officer	2%	36%	37%	17%	7%

Understanding what information is needed for a full application	3%	8%	26%	60%	2%
Getting input from other Council services	2%	7%	29%	55%	6%
Getting input from statutory consultees	3%	9%	37%	44%	6%

<b>Is there anything else that you feel is important as part of the PAA service? (selected responses)</b>
<i>“Opportunity for face to face discussion will be welcomed – this has been resisted strongly in recent years, leading to delays and ambiguity in advice given. No opportunity to put forward a case for the proposals.”</i>
<i>“Same officer has a chance to deal with the final application as well as the pre-application.”</i>
<i>“Planning officers must be able to fully articulate why a proposal is likely to be rejected.”</i>
<i>“Agents’ initial design statements should be encouraged rather than simply having to make an assessment on the basis of drawings.”</i>
<i>“Flood advice etc should only apply in certain areas – blanket approach when irrelevant is very annoying and time-consuming.”</i>
<i>“Perhaps you could consider offering a service to communities as to how best to oppose a particular development?”</i>
<i>“Dealing with a single point of contact at the council is important. It reduces repetition, confusion and builds confidence between the two parties (Council and developer).”</i>
<i>“If statutory consultee issues are involved, it is difficult to form an opinion without their involvement.”</i>
<i>“That the service is flexible to accommodate enquiries about all types of proposals.”</i>
<i>“Advice needs to be consistent, which requires the Council adopting a system which monitors advice and links it to applications when made. There should be more accountability when the advice provided has clearly misled the applicant.”</i>
<i>“Accurate and detailed documentation should be kept of advice given.”</i>
<i>“Consistency in response, so senior planners having an overview.”</i>

<b>What are your views on the Council introducing charges to cover the costs of providing a PAA service?</b>	
Strongly disagree	14%
Disagree	15%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%
Agree	32%
Strongly agree	13%
Unsure	1%

<b>To what extent do you agree with charges for PAA being set as fixed sums rather than as percentages of the application fee?</b>	
Strongly disagree	10%
Disagree	15%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Agree	40%
Strongly agree	17%
Unsure	5%

<b>To what extent do you agree that PAA for the following types of development should be provided free-of-charge?</b>						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
Complex listed building consents	18%	35%	16%	16%	10%	5%
Affordable housing developments	11%	26%	22%	22%	15%	3%
Developments relating to improving provision for people with disabilities	6%	8%	16%	37%	29%	4%
Developments by public sector partners	17%	26%	21%	21%	10%	4%
Developments by community groups and charities	9%	10%	21%	35%	21%	3%

<b>What are your views on the Council enabling applicants to pay a surcharge if they require an enhanced level of service?</b>	
Strongly disagree	20%
Disagree	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	10%
Agree	34%
Strongly agree	15%
Unsure	3%

<b>Are there any services that the Council does not currently offer as part of its PAA service that you would consider paying a surcharge to make use of? (selected responses)</b>
<i>"Input from a planning service manager."</i>
<i>"Site visit meeting, or meeting in person."</i>
<i>"Early clarification on EIA screening requests."</i>
<i>"Advice to the local community as to how best to oppose a particular planning application."</i>
<i>"Clarity on anticipated developer contributions (and associated justification)."</i>
<i>"Access to planning officers outside normal office hours."</i>