



Coventry City Council

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Briefing Note

Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

3rd November 2010

Report of
Director of City Services and Development

Title
Proposed Building Control Charges scheme – Call in

1. Purpose of the Report:

1.1 This report responds to the Call In made by Councillors Ridley, Taylor and Foster "To further understand why retrospective approval was sought when these Regulations changed in April 2010 and the Cabinet Member cancelled her last meeting due to insufficient business"

2. Consideration of the Call in:

2.1 Within the report to Cabinet Member on the 14th October 2010 relating to the proposed building control charges scheme, paragraph 3.4 confirmed that even though the Regulations changed in April 2010, the Government, through Circular 01/2010 allowed a flexible implementation period extending to 1st October 2010 to ease the administrative burden, as they are the most significant changes to the fees and charges in Building Control in recent times.

2.2. As at 1st April 2010, there were very few Local Authority Building Control services nationally that implemented a new scheme and certainly all the authorities in our region were working towards 1st October 2010. The elections in May also influenced some authorities decision to await the outcome, in case there were further significant changes, bearing in mind that Building Control has to compete against the private sector, and it is not ideal having several changes to the fees in a short space of time in terms of customer focus.

2.3 On 12th July 2010 the first seminar took place in Birmingham where speakers from the Department for Communities and Local Government, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Local Authority Building Control (LABC) explained the new charges regulations and how the Government expected to see them working, and it was pointed out what procedures needed to be put in

place to set up and operate the new charging system. It was impressed on those present that the new charging system needed to be implemented by 1st October 2010.

- 2.4 From the seminar noted above and the new CIPFA document for building control accounting, officers needed to set up a time sheet system so that finance officers could get the necessary information to work out the hourly rates for the building control section at Coventry that the new charges had to be based on. By August 2010 time sheets had been designed and officers started to gather the necessary information to work out an hourly rate.
- 2.5 On 9th September 2010 an hourly rate (£55.00 per hr including VAT) was arrived at and agreed with finance officers and we were then able to work out the charges that would need to be applied. In the course of this process we consulted with other Councils in our area, ie the West Midlands Seven and the Heart of England Councils, together with one of the East Midlands authorities with a view to us all following a similar charging system that was to be based on a model charging system suggested by the LABC.
- 2.6 There was no other consultation with outside bodies except other councils as the regulations did not require this. As with any new building control legislation, the DCLG had already gone out to consultation on the Proposed Changes to the Local Authority Charging Regime on 2nd April 2009 for 12 weeks prior to the new legislation being put in place.
- 2.7 Whilst there were some practical difficulties in bringing the scheme forward, including upgrades of the IT system which did not go well, the new charging scheme was ready so that an advertisement could be placed in the local paper in time to give the seven days required notice prior to the implementation date of 1st October 2010.
- 2.8 At the same time officers understood that the new charges scheme did not need to go to Cabinet and that it would just need to be in the form of an informal briefing. When this was found to be incorrect, it was too late to go to the meeting for September and the report was then scheduled for the October meeting, unfortunately two weeks after the date the new charges were to be implemented.
- 2.9 Due to the fact that there were other changes to the requirements of the technical parts of the building regulations there were a great number of applications submitted prior to 1ST October so that has resulted in very few applications being deposited in the couple of weeks after the 1st October 2010. Therefore, it is considered that the new charging scheme would not have had a large effect on the public to date. We have worked with the applicants and have accepted some works under the existing scheme to assist the customer and prevent any problems during this transitional period.