

## **DESCRIPTION OF OPTION**

This report proposes introducing a charge for pre-planning application discussions from 1 April 2013. It is estimated that such a scheme could result in income generation of £10,000 to £15,000 in its first year.

## **RATIONALE**

A significant number of Councils across England have introduced a charge for pre-planning application discussions. In the Merseyside area Sefton, St Helens, Halton and Liverpool Councils already have schemes in place and Knowsley are considering one.

In Wirral, Planning Officers from development management and planning policy are spending an increasing amount of time dealing with requests for pre-application discussions and no income is being generated from the professional advice that is being given.

Most of the requests for pre-application discussions are generated by the larger applications typically for new housing and commercial schemes and come from developers, businesses and planning consultants.

Applicants do benefit from the advice that is given in the pre-application discussions and it can lead to quicker decisions once an application is formally submitted. Equally, it also gives the Council the opportunity to shape development proposals to ensure that they meet the strategic aims and priorities of the Council and ensure appropriate development.

## **IMPACT**

Evidence from other Councils shows that such schemes work and generate income. Careful monitoring will ensure that the charges are set at a level that allows pre-application discussions continue.

## **MITIGATION**

The Council will base its charges on schemes that are currently in operation in Merseyside. A review of the scheme will be undertaken towards the end of the first year.