

**ADOPTION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, PLAY AREAS, BALANCING
AREAS, LANDSCAPED AREAS AND WOODLAND
(Report by Head of Community Services)**

1 SUMMARY

In January last year, Cabinet approved policy changes in respect of the adoption of public open space, play areas, balancing areas, landscaped areas and woodland arising from new built development. In considering these changes, Cabinet was asked to give consideration to the “multiplier” used to calculate contributions from developers to maintain these areas of open space. Cabinet determined that it would postpone a decision pending the determination of further information from other local authorities concerning the level of multiplier.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that commuted sums for maintenance are normally a multiple of the expected annual maintenance costs. This Council has applied a fifteen year multiplier that, at current rates of interest and inflation, would cover the maintenance costs for approximately eighteen years. The effect of different multipliers can be seen in the table below.

Multiplier	Number of years maintenance costs*
10	11
15	18
20	26
25	36

* Assumes a difference between interest and inflation rates of 2.25%

- 2.2 Officers sought information from all English and Welsh local authorities to establish levels of multiplier. Responses were received from 87 local authorities. Of those, 19 had no fixed multiplier in operation. The remainder had multipliers varying from five to twenty five years. These results are summarised in the table below.

Multiplier Range (Years)	Number of Local Authorities
5 – 9	10
10	30
11 –14	2
15	10
16 – 19	3
20	10
25	3

- 2.3 Members will note that the most common multiplier is ten years, but that an equal number of Councils have multipliers of five to nine, fifteen and twenty years. Clearly, there are significant variations in policy throughout the country.

3 IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Members will recognise that the Council's existing multiplier of fifteen years provides eighteen years of maintenance resource before the Council or the Town or Parish Council concerned has to resource future maintenance requirements. The main implication of reducing the multiplier would be to reduce the period before which the appropriate Council needs to resource maintenance, clearly an additional financial burden on the Council concerned. There would be financial benefits in increasing the multiplier, and thus the period before which Maintenance needs to be funded, but developers may be reluctant to comply with an increased requirement for commuted sums in respect of maintenance.
- 3.2 On balance, given that the District Council's existing fifteen year multiplier has been acceptable to most developers and the lack of a coherent national approach, it is considered that there should be no change at present.

4 CONCLUSION

The Council's officers have surveyed other local authorities that apply multipliers to annual maintenance costs to determine commuted sums for the maintenance of open space associated with new built development. In the light of this information, which shows a wide range of approaches to multipliers, it is considered that the council's existing policy should not change.


5 RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet confirms the Council policy to apply a multiplier of fifteen years to the annual maintenance costs associated with open space and associated areas provided through new built development and destined for adoption by the Council or the appropriate Town or Parish Council.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Adoption Of Public Open Space, Play Areas, Balancing Areas, Landscaped Areas And Woodland. Report to Cabinet, 30 January 2003.

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