I am writing in response to your Information request:

**FOI66063**

I request the information described below. To the extent that the information described below is “environmental information” this request is made pursuant to the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. To the extent that the information described below is not “environmental information”, this request is made pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. When a request for pre application planning advice and the attendant fee is received:

1) Who allocates the request to a Planning Case Officer and how is it decided which Officer receives the case?
2) Is any internal written guidance issued as to how the Officer should deal with such an enquiry or is it at their discretion?
3) Is there any internal written guidance issued to the Planning Officer as to whom to consult within and outside the Council such as specialist advice from internal teams such as Highways, Trees and Environmental Protection officers, Statutory Undertakers, neighbours, Councillors etc?
4) Is there any obligation on Officers to keep file notes, records of site visits or records of meetings in respect of pre application enquiries?
5) How many planning pre application enquiries were submitted in 2013 and after pre application advice was given how many subsequent planning applications were not dealt with by the same Planning Officer who gave the pre application advice?
6) How many Planning Officers do you currently employ and how many are Members of the Royal Town Planning Institute?

In the event that you believe that information or more information answering the terms of this request is held by another public authority, please advise by return but continue to process this request in relation to all information answering the terms of the request held by you.

This request is considered to be perfectly clear. In the event, however, that you require further information in order to identify and locate the information requested please advise by return.

**Response:**

1) 4 Principal Planning Officers are responsible for allocating case work, this is done on the basis of capacity for each officer and if there has been previous cases where an officer has been involved then continuity if preferred if capacity allows. We also have to take into account annual leave, sickness and other commitments.

2) Planning is governed by legislation (The Town and Country Planning Acts) and is a plan led system. This means that all assessment is made in the context of national and local planning policy. All adopted policy is published on the Council’s web site and National policy is available on the Government’s web site. All Officer’s work is checked by a senior officer in the team, no officer makes an individual judgement without input from others in the team.
3) There is a practice note (see link attached) which outlines the consultation process, neighbour consultation criteria is set out in the legislation requiring either the erection of a site notice or the notification of the immediate neighbours. RBWM carries out both these processes. [http://wavemaster/;internal&action=buildframes.action&Parameter=1395221978985&ctx=eKS](http://wavemaster/;internal&action=buildframes.action&Parameter=1395221978985&ctx=eKS)

4) Officers will keep notes of meetings and site visits until the subject matter is transferred into their formal response. At this point hand written notes are usually destroyed. Pre-applications are confidential and all the information is commercially sensitive – these are not subject to FOI unless there is a planning application which reveals the Pre-app and this is material in the consideration of the application – this that set of circumstances the Planning Officer would if required request that the details of the pre-app are disclosed. The applicant can decline this request and then the Borough would have to decide whether disclosure meet the FOI or ER tests.

5) 598 Pre-applications made in 2013. Not all Pre-applications lead to planning applications. In the majority of cases the planning officer will remain the same but as explained above there are cases when this does not happen. All Officer’s work is checked by a senior member of the team, no officer makes a judgement in isolation.

6) There are 20 members of Staff in the Development Control team 14 are full members of the RTPI and 2 are Licentiate members – not all of these are full time or permanent members of staff. Two members of the team are currently on maternity leave. There are 2 conservation officers and 3 enforcement officers.

If you are unhappy with the information we have provided in response to your request please write to:

Information Management Team Manager  
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Town Hall, St Ives Road  
Maidenhead  
SL6 1RF

or send an e-mail to martin.tubbs@rbwm.gov.uk

We are proud to be one of the leading authorities in England for consistently responding to information requests within the 20 working days set down by statute. Information about our performance and summaries of requests received can be found on our website:

[http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/foi_information_requests.htm](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/foi_information_requests.htm)

We are keen to hear about your experience with the Information Management Team here at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and look forward to receiving any comments you have about the way your information request was processed.
Please send any feedback to the Information Management Team Manager either by e-mail martin.tubbs@rbwm.gov.uk or in writing to the address above.

Yours sincerely

**Ben Savage**
Information Management Officer
Legal Department
Corporate Directorate
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Town Hall, St.Ives Road
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