

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
COUNCIL – 10 APRIL 2017

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE)

PLANNING APPLICATION FEES

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government has recently written to this Council asking us to confirm our intention to increase nationally set planning application fees by 20%, as proposed in the recent Housing White Paper.
- 1.2 The letter states that the additional revenue should be retained by the planning department and that existing baseline and income assumptions should not be adjusted down as a result during this parliament.
- 1.3 The letter asks that the Council's Section 151 officer respond by 13 March 2017 to confirm this intent (or not) and to provide a commitment and information to demonstrate that the additional fee income will be spent on planning services.

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Council's Section 151 responds to the Department for Communities and Local Government to confirm the intention to increase nationally set planning application fees by 20% and to provide a commitment and information to demonstrate that the additional fee income will be spent on planning services.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government published its Housing White Paper called *Fixing our Broken Housing Market* in February 2017. It included a proposal to increase nationally set planning fees by 20% from July 2017 if councils commit to invest the additional fee income in their planning departments.
- 3.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government has now written to the Council inviting us to confirm our intention in relation to the fee increase. It describes the increase as an opportunity for councils to make improvements to their resourcing, leading to better services, improved performance and greater capacity to deliver growth.
- 3.3 The invite requires the Council's Section 151 officer to provide a commitment and submit information of the 2017-2018 budget that demonstrates that additional fee income being spent on planning services, by providing the following information. This was done on 13 March 2017 in line with Government's requested timetable.

Estimated income generated from planning application fees in 2016-17	£572,000
Estimated expenditure on development management in 2016-17	£2,529,000
Estimated income from planning application fees in 2017-18	£572,000
Estimated additional income generated from higher fees	£86,000
Estimated expenditure on development management in 2017-18	£2,403,000

#### **4 Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Business Plan 2015-2018 and particularly Priority 3 to help meet the borough's housing needs and Priority 4 to help build a strong local economy.

#### **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

#### **6 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The financial implications of this report are that nationally set planning application fees would increase by 20% from July 2017. This is estimated to generate an additional £86,000 in 2017-18 based on current budget assumptions.

#### **7 Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 The risk management implications are that applicants would have to pay an additional 20% to submit applications from July 2017 onwards. As a result they are likely to expect a better service from the planning department. Many if not all councils around the country are likely to accept increased fees which means that it could remain as challenging as currently to recruit and retain planning officers.

#### **8 Security and Terrorism Implications**

- 8.1 There are no security or terrorism implications arising from this report.

#### **9 Procurement Implications**

- 9.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

#### **10 Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

## **11 Policy Implications**

11.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

## **12 Equalities and Diversity**

12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in connection with the recommendations in this report, as the 20% increase in planning fees would apply to all applicants. It is presumed that national exemptions and discounts currently applied to charities and some other bodies would remain in place.

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Background Papers:

Housing White Paper: Fixing our Broken Housing Market