
Decision Maker: **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

Date: **Tuesday 18 April 2023**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **PLANNING APPLICATION FEES CONSULTATION**

Contact Officer: Tim Horsman, Assistant Director (Planning)
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Chief Officer: Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for decision/report and options

- 1.1 To inform Members of the current consultation on planning application fees and the intended response to the government.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **Members note the consultation and agree supporting the proposals**

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: N/A
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable:
 2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (*delete as appropriate*):
 - (1) For children and young people to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
 - (2) For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices.
 - (3) For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper.
 - (4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.
 - (5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre:
 4. Total current budget for this head: £
 5. Source of funding:
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (*current and additional*):
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: N/A
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Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: N/A
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Impact on the Local Economy

1. Summary of Local Economy Implications: N/A
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Impact on Health and Wellbeing

1. Summary of Health and Wellbeing Implications: N/A
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (*current and projected*):
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The government has published a consultation entitled “Stronger performance of local planning authorities supported through an increase in planning application fees”. This consultation seeks views on improving performance of local planning authorities by:
1. Increasing planning fees (financial support)
 2. Building capacity and capability (additional resource)
 3. Introducing a more robust performance regime (improved performance)
- 3.2 The government has heard consistent feedback from all sectors that the core planning application service is not consistently performing at the level it should and one of the root causes is, for many local planning authorities, an absence of adequate resources and capability. Planning profession, local government and development industry representatives including The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Local Government Association (LGA) and the British Property Federation (BPF) are amongst many organisations calling for an increase in resources for local planning authorities.
- 3.3 The consultation also acknowledges that income is not the only problem and that many local planning authorities are struggling to recruit and retain enough staff to deliver the planning service. The government wants to provide local planning authorities with additional resources to deliver an effective planning service, facilitated by skilled and experienced planners and other technical specialists. The government recognises the significant role that local authority planners and other built environment professionals (urban designers, ecologists, landscape architects and highways engineers for example) have. The consultation outlines how the government is working with representatives across the planning and development sector to design and deliver a programme of support for building planning capacity and capability within local planning authorities and to seek views on how they can increase capacity and capability in the planning system as quickly as possible.
- 3.4 With regard to application fees the proposals are as follows:
- increase planning fees by 35% for major applications and 25% for all other applications
 - additional fees for bespoke or ‘fast track’ services
 - make an annual inflation-related adjustment to planning fees
 - ring-fence additional fees income
 - double fees for retrospective applications
 - remove the ‘free-go’ for repeat applications
 - introduce a prior approval fee for the permitted development right allowing the Crown to develop sites within the perimeter of a closed defence site

It is proposed that the Council will respond positively to all of the proposals for fees above.

- 3.5 In return for higher application fee income the following changes to performance management are proposed:
- reduce the Planning Guarantee (fee refund mechanism) from 26 weeks to 16 weeks for non-major applications
 - improve the quality of the local authority planning service by monitoring more performance measures.
- 3.6 The consultations proposes that the performance of a local planning authority should be primarily assessed on the percentage of applications determined within the statutory period and not in any agreed extension of time. The consultation also proposes assessing the performance of planning enforcement and proposals to measure ‘customer experience’

- 3.7 The consultation also seeks views on ways to fill the existing skills gaps in local planning authorities including supporting training and development of planners and increasing under-represented groups in the profession.
- 3.8 Officers recommend supporting all of the measures in this consultation – the full consultation can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/increasing-planning-fees-and-performance-technical-consultation/technical-consultation-stronger-performance-of-local-planning-authorities-supported-through-an-increase-in-planning-fees>

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Members are asked to note the consultation and agree supporting the proposals.
- 4.2 A much-needed reform of the planning services by central government which is hoped will improve performance, increase income and improve retention and quality of planning staff.
- 4.3 Although there are no direct finance implications from this paper, the changes expected should bring about better financial outcomes for the council in the near future.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Additional income may be used to secure additional staffing where required within the Planning team.

6. CUSTOMER IMPACT

- 6.1 There will be an increased cost to those wishing to submit a planning application.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Legal/Procurement/Property Implications Carbon Reduction/Social Value Implications Impact on Vulnerable Adults And Children Transformation/Policy Implications Impact on the Local Economy Impact on Health And Wellbeing Ward Councillor Views
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/increasing-planning-fees-and-performance-technical-consultation/technical-consultation-stronger-performance-of-local-planning-authorities-supported-through-an-increase-in-planning-fees