

<b>16 January 2018</b>		<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Planning Fees</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All		<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Millard, Assistant Director, Planning, Transport and Public Protection		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Andrew Millard, Assistant Director, Planning, Transport and Public Protection		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Place		
<b>This report is</b> Public		

## **Executive Summary**

This report follows that made to the 14<sup>th</sup> November meeting which set out the full set of fees and charges in relation to services within the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

On 20<sup>th</sup> December, regulations to allow Local Planning Authorities to raise their fees by 20% were introduced by the Government. As a result, the Council can start applying that increase on any date from 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

Further Director delegated authority will be sought via Cabinet in February to allow Planning fees to be varied within financial year in response to any further legal or regulatory requirements.

The full list of the changes to Planning fees is detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised Planning fees and comment on the proposal to implement, subject to Cabinet approval, with effect from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018**
- 1.2 That the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note that Director delegated authority will be sought via Cabinet in February to allow Planning fees to be varied within a financial year in response to any further regulatory changes in consultation with**

**the Portfolio Holder.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Planning application fees are set nationally and have not been increased since 2014.
- 2.2 In the 2017 Housing White Paper (published on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017), the Government set out its intention to allow Local Planning Authorities to increase their fees by 20%. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017, the Government also wrote to all Councils to directly express those intentions, inviting them to confirm that they would in principle commit to that fee increase, subject to those resources being used to boost the capacity of its Planning Service. It is understood that every Council in the country agreed in principle to those propositions.
- 2.3 The regulations to allow that to happen were approved on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and the Council could therefore raise its fees by 20% from 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018. However the Council proposes to implement the new increased charges from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

**3. Context**

- 3.1 The Housing White Paper (titled 'Fixing our broken housing market') sets out the background to the national housing crisis and proposed a broad range of reforms that the Government intends to introduce in order to boost the supply of new homes.
- 3.2 As part of this package of measures, in paragraph 2.13 of the White Paper it is highlighted that developers have consistently advised Government that the lack of capacity in Planning departments is restricting their ability to get on site and build. In addition, the White Paper recognises that Local Planning Authorities have difficulties in recruiting and retaining Planners and those with supporting specialist skills. These are the key reasons that underpin the Government's decision for this fee increase.
- 3.3 However, the Government is clear that this additional resource must be used for its intended purpose and that there will be audits to demonstrate how the funding has been used to strengthen Planning departments.
- 3.4 Members will appreciate that the Planning agenda in Thurrock is one of the biggest and most complex in the country. Consequently, it is even more critical that the Council has the necessary capacity, skills and experience to deliver this agenda. In addition, Thurrock's location on the edge of London exposes the Council to the strongest public and private sector market for Planners in the country. It is not considered that the fee increase will deter growth in Thurrock. To the contrary, the evidence is that having the resources in place to continue to deliver a top class Planning Service is an attractor of investment.

- 3.5 The White Paper also refers to a further potential rise in fees in the future (linked specifically to housing delivery). This will first be subject to consultation, the timing of which has not yet been set.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 The raising of Planning fees in line with the national changes will enable the Council to generate essential income for the funding of the Planning Service, to support the retention and recruitment of Planners and related specialists. As a result, it will help to ensure the on-going provision of a high quality Planning Service for residents, developers, business, industry and all other stakeholders involved in the Planning process.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 The proposals have been discussed with the local Planning Agents Panel who are supportive of the fee increase provided that Planning resources are boosted.

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 The changes in Planning fees will enable the Planning Service to effectively contribute to the delivery of Council priorities, including encouraging and promoting job creation and economic prosperity and protecting our green environment.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Carl Tomlinson**  
**Finance Manager**

The additional income will be generated from the fee increases has to be reinvested in the Planning Service (for the reasons set out in the report). It is anticipated that the annual increase in fees will be circa £180,000

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Neil Weeks**  
**Planning and Highways Lawyer**

There are no legal implications associated with raising Planning fees in line with national legislative changes.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

It is not considered that there are any equality or diversity implications associated with implementing this national change to Planning fees.

### 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None

### 8. **Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):**

- None

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Schedule of Planning fees with effect from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018

### **Report Author:**

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