

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:	2773
Author:	Paul Seddon
Department:	Development
Contact:	Paul Seddon (Job Title: Head of Planning, Email: paul.seddon@nottinghamcity.gov.uk, Phone: 62797)
Subject:	Planning Application fees: Increase in nationally set planning fees
Total Value:	c.£200000 (Type: Revenue)
Decision Being Taken:	To accept the Government's proposed 20% increase in planning fees on the Council's behalf and instruct the Strategic Director of Finance to confirm that the amount raised through these higher fees will be spent entirely on planning functions. This must be certified and confirmed to Government by Monday 13 March 2017.
Reasons for the Decision(s)	<p>The Housing White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' was published on 7 February 2017. It includes proposals for boosting local authority capacity and capability to improve the speed and quality with which planning cases are handled. Government have responded to concerns from developers that the lack of capacity and capability in planning departments is restricting their ability to get on and build. To boost local authority capacity and capability, the Government will increase nationally set planning fees for councils that commit to invest the additional fee income in their planning department. If the increased resource is not invested in the planning function then Government will reduce the Council's fee level back to the original fee level by a change in the national regulations.</p> <p>This uplift in fees is not considered to be impactful on development and will not disadvantage the city in encouraging investment, regeneration and development to happen. Discussions across the region and with core cities have confirmed that all Councils intend to take up the offer.</p> <p>The nature of the timing of the offer and need for immediate confirmation has meant that this has not been part of budget making. It is however a significant opportunity to invest in the planning directorate and supporting services without any cost to the Council and allows capacity and capability to be aligned to help support and accelerate development, particularly housing schemes.</p> <p>Department of Communities and Local Government require the letter of acceptance to be sent by the Council's S151 Officer and confirmation has been received that he would be prepared to do so.</p>

Other Options Considered:	To reject the proposed increase in planning application fees. Rejected - the opportunity represents a way to increase capacity in the Planning Directorate and support Council development, housing and regeneration priorities that otherwise would not be available. There is no detrimental impact anticipated that would make refusal of the fee increase a sensible option.
Background Papers:	Letter from Department for Communities and Local Government - Planning application fees: the Government's offer
Unpublished background papers:	170221 Fee Increase_Letter from DCLG (5).pdf
Published Works:	
Affected Wards:	Citywide
Colleague / Councillor Interests:	
Consultations:	Date: 09/03/2017
	Chief Finance Officer: Geoff Walker
	the offer by Government has not formed part of the budget making but presents an opportunity for investment in the planning directorate at no cost to the city council and provides additional resource that will support development and regeneration activity. It is not expected that there would be any disadvantage to encouraging investment in the city as all councils are expected to take up the offer
	Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.
Crime and Disorder Implications:	None
Equality:	EIA not required. Reasons: Fees are nationally set by Government and apply equally to all planning applications. An EIA will be completed by Government as part of change to regulations if required.
Decision Type:	Portfolio Holder
Subject to Call In:	No

The call-in procedure does not apply to the proposed decision because the delay likely to be caused by the call in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or Vice-Chair) in his/her absence has been consulted and agreed both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all circumstances and that it should be treated as a matter of urgency.

Person Consulted: Brian Parbutt

Consultation Date: 10/03/2017

The Government provided a short timescale for the city council to respond and confirm its decision. The decision must be communicated to Government by Monday 13th March. Wider and thorough consideration of the potential impact of a rise in planning application fees for the city council and citizens, and discussions across the sector have been necessary. These were concluded this week.

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance

Legal Advice:

The ability to raise fees is conditional upon the additional income being spent on planning services. As long as that condition is met then no legal implications should arising from the decision. Advice provided by Ann Barrett (Team Leader) on 10/03/2017.

Finance Advice:

The DCLG have allowed Local Authorities to increase the Planning Fee only if the additional revenue raised is spent on Planning functions. The Section 151 Officer is required to commit to this undertaking. An estimate of the additional income raised through this increase is circa £200,000 based on a 20% increase of the 2016/17 budgeted income from Planning fees. The Chief Planner does not expect any reduction in income caused by the fee increase. The additional income received will be monitored to ensure that this requirement is adhered to. Advice provided by Susan Tytherleigh (Senior Finance Manager) on 10/03/2017.

Signatures

Jane Urquhart (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing)

SIGNED and Dated: 13/03/2017

David Bishop (Deputy CE, CD for Development and Growth)

SIGNED and Dated: 13/03/2017