

DECISION RECORD ¹

Officer Key Decisions are subject to the Council's Call-In Procedure (Part 4 of the Council's Constitution [Part 4e - Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules](#))

Planning Application Amendment Fee 2026/27

Staff Contact: Atif Iqbal
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Cabinet Member: Jeannette Thomas
Portfolio: Resources & Performance

1. **Decision**

It is recommended that the proposed fee structure for the Planning Application Amendment Service be approved for inclusion within the 2026/27 Fees and Charges schedule, with implementation from 1st May 2026. Full details of the proposed charges and supporting rationale are set out in Appendix A and completed EqIA is detailed in Appendix B.

2. **Reasons for the decision**

As part of the wider 2026/27 Fees and Charges review, Planning services have undertaken an assessment of the discretionary amendment service offered to applicants during the determination of live planning applications. The Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy 2023–2026 emphasises the importance of adopting a more commercial approach, ensuring that discretionary services are cost-reflective and that officer time is appropriately recovered.

Currently, applicants are permitted to submit amendments during the assessment of their planning application without charge. These changes often require officers to reassess proposals, update reports, review revised documents, and undertake further consultation, resulting in additional workload and delays to decision making. This pressure on officer time is not currently funded, placing avoidable strain on resources and impacting service efficiency.

Benchmarking undertaken by officers shows that several other local authorities have already introduced similar charging mechanisms for amendments, with fee structures comparable to those proposed for Stevenage. The recommended fee levels therefore represent a proportionate approach that reflects local context while remaining consistent with wider sector practice.

Introducing a fee is also intended to encourage applicants to make fuller use of the pre-application service, where potential issues can be addressed prior to formal submission. This supports better quality applications, reduces pressure on officers, and aligns with the purpose for which the pre-application process exists.

The proposed approach provides a more sustainable model for resourcing discretionary amendments, reduces dependency on the wider taxpayer, and ensures a fairer, more transparent system for applicants. In addition, exemptions for Listed Building Consent applications and for disability or age-related adaptation works ensure that the policy remains balanced and sensitive to public interest and social need.

As the Cabinet has already approved the overall Fees & Charges for 2026/27 in October, it is recommended this introduction of the Planning Application Amendment Service fees, be adopted for implementation from 1 May 2026.

3. **Alternative options considered and rejected** ²

Do not Implement revised Fees Structure: This option was not recommended. Retaining the current approach where applicants can request amendments without charge would continue to place additional, unfunded pressure on planning officers, who must reassess proposals, update reports, and carry out further consultation when changes are submitted.

4. **Consultation**

(a) Comments of Cabinet Member ^{3 4}

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Richard Henry and Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr Jeannette Thomas were consulted in the Commercial Investment Working Group on 10 March 2026, and both supported the revised fee structure.

Portfolio folder for Environment and Climate Change, Cllr Rob Broom, was consulted on 18 March, and agreed with the proposed fees.

(b) Comments of other consultees ⁵

5. **Following consultation with, and the concurrence of the Cabinet Member, I am proceeding with the proposed decision.**

Signed: Atif Iqbal

Title: Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer Date: 23.03.2026

6. **PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED/SIGNED FORM TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES FOR PUBLICATION**

¹ for guidance see Borough Solicitor's note "Taking Decisions"

² details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer at the time the decision was made

³ record any conflict of interest declared by any Cabinet Member consulted. If a Cabinet Member declares a conflict of interest DO NOT PROCEED without seeking advice from the Borough Solicitor

⁴ If the matter has general significance for the Council and/or is, or is likely to be, controversial, then the officer shall consult the appropriate Cabinet Member before proceeding. In some cases, it will be necessary to consult more than one Cabinet Member, and in some cases the Leader of the Council will need to be consulted

⁵ If the matter has local significance, but no general significance for the Council and no controversial aspects, the officer shall consult or inform the local member in writing (or by e mail) and proceed. It is essential that all officers responsible for delivering services ensure that local members are kept well briefed on issues affecting their areas.