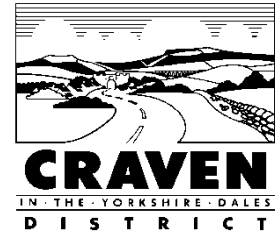


Policy Committee – 11th April 2017

Planning Fees and Planning Team Enhancement



Lead Member: Cllr Foster

Report of the Strategic Manager Planning and Regeneration
Ward(s) affected: All Wards in Craven (outside of the National Park)

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval to confirm to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that the Council intends to increase its planning fees by 20% from 1st July 2017.

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Confirm that the Council wishes to increase planning fees by 20% from 1st July 2017 in line with DCLG's proposals arising from the publication of the Housing White Paper '*Fixing our Broken Housing Market*';
- 2.2 Increase planning fees by 20% from the 1st July 2017.
- 2.3 Agree that the additional resources are used to deliver the proposal set out in 5.4.

3. Background

- 3.1 In the Housing White Paper '*Fixing our Broken Housing Market*' the Government announced the ability for Planning Authorities to raise the planning fees by 20% if it is agreed that the additional resources will be used to support the resilience and performance of the Planning Department. Planning fees are currently set nationally through the DCLG.
- 3.2 On the 21st February 2017 the DCLG contacted all local planning authorities in England to seek their confirmation that they would wish to take up this opportunity.
- 3.2 The Council's Section 151 Officer was requested by DCLG to submit a request for the authority to raise the planning fees, to promise the additional resource would be spent on the Planning Department and to provide information setting out the likely resources generated and the new costs.
- 3.3 The Housing White Paper '*Fixing our Broken Housing Market*' places a number of new burdens on the Planning Department especially around the monitoring of housing delivery and also a new performance measure, the Housing Delivery Test that will assess the Council's ability to build houses.
- 3.4 The Housing White Paper '*Fixing our Broken Housing Market*' states that failure to meet the Housing Delivery Test will result in a number of sanctions. These are set out below.

Date	Target Percentage of Houses to be Built	Sanction
November 2017	95%	Publish and Action Plan
November 2017	85%	Introduce 20% buffer to the 5-year land supply
November 2018	25%	Introduce presumption in favour of development for all sites
November 2017	45%	Introduce presumption in favour of development for all sites
November 2017	65%	Introduce presumption in favour of development for all sites

4. DCLG Submission

4.1 The Government requested that by the 13th March 2017 that the Section 151 officers should submit a request to be allowed to request the increase in planning fees. A holding response has already been sent to DCLG and the formal decision of this Committee will be sent to DCLG to confirm the Council's position. In addition the following information table was submitted.

	2016/17	2017/18
Estimated expenditure on development management	468,892	572,708
Estimated income generated from planning application fees	440,000	410,000
Estimated additional income generated from higher planning fees N/A	N/A	82,000

4.2 It is estimated that the increase in planning fees would generate in the region of £82,000 based on the budget set for 2017/18. Clearly this is dependent on the level and type of planning applications within the year as it is could be as high as £100,000 based on the 2016/17 income.

5. Planning Department Enhancement Proposal

5.1 In considering the future requirements of the service the Development Control Manager, Policy Manager and Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration looked at the current stresses the teams face and also the new burdens that the Housing White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market' is introducing. The key concerns into the future are the requirement to complete the Local Plan and also the new risks surrounding the need to ensure that houses are built in a timely manner. The three improvement aims that we identified are:

- Complete the development and approval of the Local Plan
- Accelerate the approval of strategically important sites
- Monitor and accelerate the building of existing sites

5.2 The additional resources will allow the teams to improve their performance and increase their resilience in a number of ways. End to end there are considerable opportunities for delay from the initial contact through to the occupation of the dwellings or businesses space.

Currently a planning application often receives pre-application advice but still there are significant delays because issues such as affordable housing viability has not been confirmed or the S106 has not been drawn up and after the application has been approved the discharge of conditions can be complex and time consuming. Once the application has been concluded the planning officer will receive a new case load so any amendments or discharge of conditions necessarily will be caught in the wider caseload. These delays to the delivery of sustainable sites will make the achievement of the Housing Delivery Test more difficult. The additional resources will allow officers the time to work intensively with key sites or developers to bring forward successful sustainable sites.

- 5.3 Craven DC, like other councils, face challenges with retention of staff so with the additional resources we will be able to implement better succession planning by allowing more development opportunities while also recruiting, training and developing a new planner.
- 5.4 To achieve these aims the following is proposed:
 - Place additional resources to cover the costs of the delivery of the Local Plan to the point of adoption
 - Create enhanced account manager roles for the two planning officer to work with key developers or sites from inception and through build out to accelerate the development of high quality schemes.
 - Back-fill the Planning Officer’s roles with an additional Assistant Planning Officer
 - To fund the training costs that will support the new roles and the additional Assistant Planning Officer.

5.5 The estimated costs to deliver the proposal are:

Proposal	Estimated Cost (inc. on costs)
Local Plan Delivery	£48,900
Account Manager Roles	£4,900
Assistant Planning Officer	£27,000
Total	£80,800

6.0 Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

The costs of meeting the proposals set out in 5.2 are estimated to be £80,900. The expected income of £82,000 will cover this cost and based on the last two years income this appears to be a conservative estimate.

The additional income is reliant on the type and number of planning applications so the income can go up as well as down therefore proposed permanent increase in costs is £35,000 of the expected £80,000 costs.

6.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from the proposal. The new fee structure would need to be published in the usual way.

6.3 Contribution to Corporate Priorities and the Community Strategy –

The successful delivery of the development control function would contribute to achieving the following corporate priorities:

- Enterprising Craven
- Resilient Communities

7.0 Risk Management

The first risk is the inability to meet the Housing Delivery Test which this proposal hopes to contribute towards.

The second risk is if there is a dramatic fall in income then the new costs will be unsustainable. In the event of a large decrease in work the level of staffing and the recruitment policy would be reviewed in these circumstances.

The third possible risk is that the increase in costs will be a disincentive to growth/investment. The biggest risk would be with householder applications but the increase in costs is a very small (£34 increase for an extension) proportion of the overall costs of the architect and especially of the build costs and so the risk is extremely small.

8. Consultations with Others –

Legal Team, Finance Team

9. Access to Information: Background Documents – Housing White Paper ‘Fixing our Broken Housing Market’**10. Appendices –**

Annex 1 - A Draft Guide to the Future Fees for Planning Applications in England

Annex 2 – Letter from DCLG and confirmation letter from S151 Officer to DCLG

11. Author of the Report –

David Smurthwaite, Strategic Manager Planning and Regeneration

Tel: 01756 746409; Email: dsmurthwaite@cravenc.gov.uk

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.