



Fees and Charges General Fund 2025/26

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

January 2025-April 2026

Date created	October 2024
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Nadia Capuano
Version	1
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Business Unit and Team	Finance

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqIA?

Title:	General Fund Fees and Charges 2025/26	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		Yes
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		No
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		No
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?		Yes

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	No
Promote equal opportunities?	No
Encourage good relations?	No

If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqIA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqIA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

I determine that no EqIA is needed to inform the decision on the .

Name of assessor:

Decision approved by:

Role:

Role:

Date:

Date:

Equality Impact Assessment Form

For a policy, project, strategy, staff or service change, or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		Fees and Charges Proposals 2025/26 General Fund			
Lead Assessor	Nadia Capuano			Assessment team	Nadia Capuano
Start date	January 2025	End date	April 2026		Brian Moldon
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)	October 2025				

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Users of discretionary chargeable services across Stevenage
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>To assess the impact of the proposed changes to fees and charges for 2025/26 on Stevenage residents and businesses.</p> <p>To ensure that residents and businesses can access a wide range of Council services at different price points.</p> <p>To assist the Council with its financial security by setting an appropriate level of fees and charges in order to adequately cover the cost of running the service and to combat inflationary pressures.</p>

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Concessions are available for some fees and charges (for	Promote equal opportunities	Services for residents and businesses are available to all.	Encourage good relations	

	<p>example garages, allotments) for those who are council tenants or who are on means tested benefits. There is differentiated charging in place for services such as garages, meaning residents can choose a garage which fits in their price range. There are a wide range of car parks with different price points that residents can choose from. For commercial services, such as trade waste, businesses have a choice as to whether they use the Council or a private sector provider.</p>				
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<p>What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?</p>	<p>Sectoral knowledge</p> <p>Demand data (Digital Lettings on garages) and usage statistics across all service areas</p> <p>Benchmarking with other local authorities</p> <p>Feedback from past consultations (Parking services)</p> <p>Office for National Statistics (ONS) data</p>
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LGA guidance on local fee setting for regulators (Environmental Health)

In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?

The proposed increases in fees and charges for 2025/26 vary across the General Fund as they have been assessed on a case by case basis.

A breakdown of some of the key considerations by the services is provided below.

Garages services have invested heavily in the garage stock, paying £835k in capital investment for 2024/25 through Garage Improvement Programme and committing a further £844k. Garage prices are benchmarked against other local offers as part of the fees and charges process. Looking at how the proposals compare, the proposed pricing for standard garages in Stevenage ranges from £12 to £23.96 per week, with the proposed charges sitting directly in the middle of the other benchmarked local authorities.

Planning services benchmarked their prices against other local offers as part of the fees and charges process. Looking at how the Stevenage proposals compare, the proposed pricing ranges are on average, in line with the pre-application charges which are set out by Hertfordshire based authorities. In addition, the charges were assessed following a review of the cost of providing the service which includes the costs of appointing specialist advisor's dependent on the type of development which is proposed.

Stevenage provide some of the best allotments in Hertfordshire. All sites are secure, there is good water provision at all sites, plus notice boards and information, and many sites have toilet facilities too. The waiting list for an allotment in Stevenage is currently over 400 people. The proposal is to increase allotment charges for 2025 broadly in line with inflationary increases to enable the service to remain cost neutral, thereby retaining the position that Stevenage residents are not subsidising a discretionary service benefiting a relatively small number of people.

Cemetery services benchmarked their prices against other local authorities and have amended some charges accordingly. The cost of the funeral is normally paid for from the estate of the deceased and for those in financial difficulty and who qualify, a funeral grant can be applied for to help with the cost of burial. Triple fees are applicable for the interment of persons who are non-residents of Stevenage (with the exception of natural burials), meaning that the cost is more affordable for those that reside in the borough.

Evidence and Impact Assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Older people may be on lower/fixed incomes and therefore more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts. In relation to parking in Stevenage, they may also be more likely to need to visit the hospital area where prices are recommended to go up 10%, although it should be noted that prices were frozen the previous year. ONS data confirms that under 30s and over 65s have lower than average incomes, with ages in between having higher than average incomes, raising the possibility of more than inflationary price increases having a disproportionate effect on them.</p> <p>The price increases in garages, allotments and planning pre-applications might impact the elderly who are on pension credit and could affect young people on low incomes.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and residents use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Digital Lettings.</p> <p>The pre-application service in planning is also a discretionary service and there is no requirement for someone to enter into pre-application discussions with the Council regarding their proposals.</p> <p>Although the Council charge an enquiry fee in planning, the fee is waived to ensure a person who is elderly is provided the advice</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>			

	<p>they need in order to extend the property e.g. to provide facilities to meet their day to day needs.</p> <p>In addition, older persons can also access free services such as the Planning Portal and Planning Aid for general advice on planning related matters.</p> <p>Concessions are available for allotment holders and bulky waste users on means tested benefits.</p>		
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Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>According to the 2021 Census, 17.2% of Stevenage residents had a disability covered under the Equality Act that limited their day-to-day activities.</p> <p>If increased parking charges discourage driving/parking by others, there will be increased parking availability for blue badge holders (who are not charged on street and for whom heavily discounted car park season tickets are available).</p> <p>ONS data confirms the existence of a disability pay gap in the UK. People with disabilities who do not have a Blue Badge allowing them to park for free may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>A significant reduction in the concession given to disabled season ticket holders should be noted, although the concession will still be considerably higher than recommended in the Concessions Policy.</p> <p>The price increase in garages and allotments might impact on people who are on disability allowance.</p> <p>Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and licensees use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Digital Lettings.</p> <p>The pre-application service in planning is discretionary and there is no requirement for person to enter into pre-application discussions with the Council regarding a development proposal.</p>				

	In environmental health, certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>Through Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees can bid for garages. The Council reserves the right to give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and decided on its merits. The overall decision will be undertaken by the Garages Manager.</p> <p>For allotments, a range of plot sizes are provided to cater for people's varying needs / abilities.</p> <p>Whilst the Council provides a chargeable enquiry service in planning, the fee is waived for a person who is disabled and wishes to seek general advice about extending a property. In addition, a person who is disabled can apply for planning permission without paying a planning fee in accordance with Central Government Planning Fee Regulations.</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	For allotments, there is the need to establish whether there is the requirement for specific physical provision on site to support people with disabilities. This will be informed by responses to a consultation to be undertaken during 2024/25.

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Marriage or Civil Partnership

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Pregnancy & Maternity

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Pregnant women may be more likely to attend the hospital, and therefore disproportionately affected by price rises there. The proposed increases in parking charges at Corey's Mill Lane equate to 20p extra for up to 1 hour, 30p extra for up to 2 hours and 50p extra for up to 3 hours.</p> <p>Whilst price rises will generally be considered to have a negative impact on customers, they will also have the effect of lowering demand and thereby improving customers chances of finding a convenient space.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Residents that identify with certain ethnic groups are more likely to have a lower economic status. Which ethnic groups are most affected by income inequality? (parliament.uk) Please see the socio-economic section below for more detail on support.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Religion or Belief					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information	No impacts identified				

you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Socio-economic¹					
e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information	In May 2023, 6,163 households were in receipt of Universal Credit in Stevenage, a 2% decrease from 6,283 households in March 2022.				

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

you used to support this assessment

In July 2023, there were 4,252 Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants in Stevenage, 1,853 of which were male and 2,401 were female. This is 21% increase in claimants from March 2022 when there were 3,528 total PIP claimants in Stevenage.

In March 2023, the number of Council Tax Support recipients of working age (non-pensioners) was 3,154, which has slightly decreased from 3,366 in March 2022.

Any increase in fees is likely to have or be perceived to have an impact most on those who are already at socio-economic disadvantage.

This could mean that parking becomes unaffordable for some people.

At the same time, the town centre is well served by other modes of transport, whilst fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market rate).

Existing and proposed parking charges represent only a small cost compared to the overall expense of running a car, and more than half of households in the bottom income quartile do not have a car. Meanwhile, the costs to society of motoring are significantly higher than the sums received by the exchequer from motorists, meaning that motorists are effectively subsidised by non-motorists through general taxation and thereby advantaged while it is often the case that protected characteristics correlate with lower rates of car ownership.

The price increase in garages might impact residents at a socio-economic disadvantage who are in receipt of benefits. Currently 26.79% of garage licence holders are Council Tenants, which means that they are potentially in receipt of benefits payments, but this is mitigated by the fact that Council tenants do not pay Value Added Tax (VAT) on their garage license and therefore the weekly payments are 20% cheaper.

Around 11% of Stevenage allotment plot holders are currently receiving a concessionary rate.

Allotments will continue to offer good value for money particularly in comparison to other leisure activities in Stevenage. For example:

- Gym membership £29.99/month equivalent to £0.99 / day
- 250m² Allotment (£0.87/m²) equivalent to £0.62 / day

However, the risk of changes to pre-application planning fees affecting residents at a socio-economic disadvantage is very low as a resident with a socio-economic disadvantage is unlikely to afford to undertake development works.

	<p>Some fees for cemetery services have increased, which may have a negative impact on those at a socio economic disadvantage. However, the cost of a funeral is normally covered by the estate of the deceased so may not pose a financial burden. In addition, for those that qualify, a funeral grant can be applied for to help with the cost of a burial.</p> <p>The increased charge for bulky waste may impact the ability of those at a socio-economic disadvantage to pay for waste disposal. There are alternative ways to dispose of unwanted items, such as Facebook Marketplace and the local Household Waste Recycling Centre, which is free of charge.</p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>Awareness raising of concessions available to those on means tested benefits.</p> <p>Through Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees bid for garages. Prices and locations are clearly displayed meaning that potential licensees are fully aware of all the options available.</p> <p>For allotments, a range of plot sizes are provided to cater for people's varying needs / abilities.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	

Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	X	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>Increased parking charges may promote modal shift away from using cars, leading to improved public health through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.</p>				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Discussion between service areas, Finance Business Partners and commercial team on proposed increases.	Residents?	Not consulted with
Voluntary & community sector?	Not consulted with	Partners?	Not consulted with
Other stakeholders?	For allotments, a satisfaction survey was last carried out with plot holders in 2014. Another survey is required in 2024/25.		

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		In Environmental Health, certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy, which has a positive impact on several of characteristics.
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	<p>Some elderly, disabled & socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to being charged an additional 38p to £1.50 per week for garages. Every effort will be made for them to be moved to a lower cost garage if requested (and if available).</p> <p>Some elderly, disabled & socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to the increase in planning charges. However, whilst the Council's enquiry service is charged for general householder proposals, for the elderly and persons who are disabled the fee is waived. In terms of socio-economic disadvantaged residents, it is highly unlikely they will use the planning service due to the significant costs involved to extend properties. There is also free advice provided on the Planning Portal and Planning Aid and the pre-application service provided by the Council is only discretionary.</p> <p>In summary, it is anticipated that the vast majority of persons applying for pre-application advice will be less affected by these price changes.</p> <p>Allotments will remain largely affordable to the majority of Stevenage residents.</p> <p>Some elderly and socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to some cemetery fees being increased. Concessions or additional funding support is available for those whose circumstances meet the criteria.</p>

	2c. Stop and remove	
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Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations:

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
The Garage Services team will continue to monitor termination levels, offer assistance to licensees looking for a cheaper garage and assist them with the Digital Lettings process.	Digital Lettings will impartially assign garages to bidders based on date of application (bid received) whilst the Garages team will review exceptional cases, promoting equal opportunity. The Garages team will also offer assistance when needed to encourage good relations.	Rebecca Millett	April 2025	The Garage Services team already monitor termination levels and offer assistance to licensees looking for a cheaper garage.
Raise awareness of allotments concessions available to those on means tested benefits	Promote equal opportunities	Julia Hill / Matt Pearson	December 2024	Information provided on the Council's web pages and on invoice.
Undertake satisfaction survey with allotment plot holders	Provide feedback	Julia Hill / Matt Pearson	June 2025	Findings will inform an Allotment Strategy.
Monitor levels of service uptake across increased fee areas in cemeteries	Provide feedback	Kris White	December 2025	Will form part of financial reporting.

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Brian Moldon

Date: 9th September 2024