



Fees and Charges General Fund 2026/27

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

January 2026 - March 2027

Date created	August 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Annajoy David
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.

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equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

First things first:

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

Title:	Fees and Charges General Fund 2026/27	
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 EqlA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA 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.

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I determine that no EqlA 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 General Fund 2026/27			
Lead Assessor	Annajoy David			Assessment team	Daud Latif Atif Iqbal Annajoy David
Start date	January 2026	End date	March 2027		
When will the EqlA be reviewed? (Typically, every 2 years)		August 2026			

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Users of discretionary chargeable services across Stevenage
What is the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>To assess the impact of the proposed changes to fees and charges for 2026/27 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 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 example garages, allotments).	Promote equal	Services for residents and businesses are available to all.	Encourage good relations	The fees are published online and available to view by

	<p>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.</p> <p>There are a wide range of car parks with different price points that residents can choose from. At lister hospital the Council offers cheaper parking up to 3 hours at £5.50 compared to the hospital parking which charges £ 7.60 and operates 24/7 whilst the Council parking operates 7:30am-7:30pm Monday to Saturday. For commercial services, such as trade waste, businesses have a choice as to whether they use the Council or a private sector provider.</p>	opportunities			<p>end users before they apply for a service.</p> <p>Additionally, service users are usually informed of fees ahead of starting works so all parties involved are aware of the fees before committing to works.</p>
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<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 2026/27 vary across the General Fund as they have been assessed on a case-by-case basis. The average price increase across the General Fund fees is 3.54% (excluding Planning), which is marginally lower than the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August.

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

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 £13.07 to £25.56 per week, with the proposed charges sitting directly in the middle of the other benchmarked local authorities. As part of the customer service provision SBC offer a cleansing, weeding and sweeping program as part of the service to tenants to ensure best value offer for residents and that garage blocks are in optimal condition externally.

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.

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 (except for natural burials), meaning that the cost is more affordable for those that reside in the borough. A single 5ft burial is £975 for Stevenage residents so it would be £2925 for externals.

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 by an average of 7.21% with the maximum increase being 40p. 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 normally charges a fee for planning enquiries, this fee is waived for elderly individuals to ensure they receive the necessary advice to modify their</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

	<p>property to suit their daily needs. Additionally, if a person has mobility issues and meets the eligibility criteria for support, the costs of any required adaptations are also waived.</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> <p>In environmental health, certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy.</p>		
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)	

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 and their partners 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 10p extra for up to 1 hour, 30p extra for up to 2 hours and 40p extra for up to 3 hours.</p> <p>Price rises will impact negatively on lower income customers and whilst there could be an impact of decreased demand on parking users from lower domicile socio economic groups will be impacted . Monitoring on demand levels should be undertaken, and this price increase should be kept under review</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	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)		

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-economic ¹ e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information	The average price increase across the General Fund fees is 3.54% (excluding Planning), which is marginally lower than the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August.				

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 May 2023, 6,163 households were in receipt of Universal Credit in Stevenage. In July 2023, there were 4,252 Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants in Stevenage. In March 2023, the number of Council Tax Support recipients of working age (non-pensioners) was 3,154.

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.

Whilst most parking fee increases have been kept under 50p per hour mark, an increase in parking 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).

The current and proposed parking charges represent only a small fraction of the overall cost of owning and operating a car. In fact, more than half of households in the lowest income quartile do not own a vehicle. Meanwhile, the societal costs of motoring—such as environmental impact, road maintenance, and congestion—far exceed the revenue collected from motorists. This means that motorists are effectively subsidised by non-motorists through general taxation, giving them an unintended financial advantage. Car ownership is also less common among individuals with protected characteristics, making this disparity more significant. Public transport offers a more affordable alternative, with bus fares capped at £2 per journey. Additionally, elderly and disabled individuals can travel for free on buses, along with a companion.

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. Additionally, Stevenage Garages used for storage are much cheaper than private providers as benchmarked below:

Price per week, 100 sq ft - size of single garage:

- Shurguard: £32.77, Surestore: £43.68, SafeStore: £54.99, Access Storage: £32.77
- SBC garages: cheapest:-£7.25, median/common: £15, most expensive £25.56

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:

- Cheapest annual gym membership £329.90 equivalent to £0.90 / day

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average allotment price of £90 per year equivalent to £0.25 / day <p>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> <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>			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<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>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	X	Negative impact		Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Increased parking charges may promote modal shift away from using cars, leading to improved public health through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

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.
	2a. Adjustments made

Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2b. Continue as planned	<p>The average price increase across the General Fund fees is 3.54% (excluding Planning), which is marginally lower than the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August.</p> <p>Some elderly, disabled & socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to being charged a higher amount 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, and socio-economically disadvantaged residents may be negatively affected by the increase in planning charges. However, while the Council charges a fee for general householder planning enquiries, this fee is waived for elderly and disabled individuals to ensure they can access necessary advice. Regarding socio-economically disadvantaged residents, current data indicates that demand for planning services is higher among other socio-economic groups. Therefore, the impact on lower-income groups is expected to be minimal. It is recommended that data monitoring be carried out during the next financial year, with findings reported in the 2027/28 F&C General Fund report. Additionally, free planning advice is available through the Planning Portal and Planning Aid. The Council's pre-application advice service is discretionary, meaning it is not a mandatory part of the planning process. In summary, most individuals seeking pre-application advice are unlikely to be significantly affected by the proposed fee changes.</p> <p>Allotments will remain largely affordable to most 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	

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.
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 & Deputy S151 Officer: Atif Iqbal

Date: 01/09/2025

Please send this EqlA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.