



Fees and Charges General Fund 2027/28

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

January 2027 – August 2028

Date created	August 2026
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Atif Iqbal
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:	Fees and Charges General Fund 2027/28	
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?	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 2027/28			
Lead Assessor	Annajoy David			Assessment team	Atif Iqbal Annajoy David Daud Latif GF Service Managers
Start date	January 2027	End date	August 2028		
When will the EqlA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		August 2027			

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Residents, Business and users of discretionary services across Stevenage
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	The proposed changes to fees and charges for 2027/28 aim to: - Support the Council's financial resilience by setting fees at levels that contribute towards the cost of service delivery and help address inflationary pressures. - Increase income across General Fund services where appropriate, supporting the Council's wider financial sustainability objectives, including the corporate priority of balancing the budget. - Minimise the use of public funds to subsidise services that primarily benefit individual users, organisations, or specific groups where cost recovery can reasonably be achieved. This EqlA aims to: - Assess the impact of revised fees and charges on Stevenage residents and businesses. - Ensure continued access to a broad range of Council services at affordable and varied price points.

What **positive measures** are in place (if any) to help **fulfil our legislative duties** to:

Remove discrimination & harassment	The Council's services are available to all residents and businesses, as appropriate. For each type of service request, the same fees and charges apply to all applicants, ensuring a consistent and transparent approach. Concessions are available for certain services, such as garages and allotments, for Council tenants and individuals in receipt of means-tested benefits. In addition, some services, including garages, operate a differentiated pricing structure, allowing residents to choose an option that best suits their budget. Residents also have access to a range of car parks with varying price points, providing flexibility and choice. For commercial services, such as trade waste collection, businesses may choose whether to use the Council's service or an alternative private sector provider. Allotments are offered based on the waiting list, i.e. those who have been on the list the longest. Applicants can view a plot before they take it on to see site arrangements and facilities as well as plot details. A range of plot sizes are available across all sites. Residents can	Promote equal opportunities	The Council's services are available to all residents and businesses, as appropriate. For each type of service request, the same fees and charges apply to all applicants, ensuring a consistent and transparent approach. Reducing the cost of Blue Badge parking arrangements helps support equality of opportunity for disabled people who may be more reliant on car travel due to mobility or accessibility needs. The changes aim to improve affordability whilst continuing to ensure the sustainable administration of the parking permit scheme.	Encourage good relations	All fees and charges are published online and are available for review before a customer applies for a service. Furthermore, service users are generally informed of any applicable charges before works commence, ensuring that all parties are aware of the costs prior to making a commitment. Where fee changes apply to ongoing services, such as garages or tenancies on Council estates, existing service users are notified in advance of the changes taking effect. The Council provides concessionary fees and charges where appropriate, including for garage tenants and certain planning services. These arrangements help support affordability and accessibility for eligible service users.
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	choose the size they want or wait for specific plots to become available.		Allotment pricing is based on plot sizes only (per square metre) Allotment legislation ensures new tenants get at least 3 months' allowance before termination of tenancy can progress. Allotment tenancy agreement applies to all plot holders.		These measures demonstrate the Council's commitment to transparency, affordability, and supporting members of the community who may have limited financial means.
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Sectoral knowledge Demand data (Digital Lettings on garages) and usage statistics across service areas Benchmarking with other local authorities Feedback from past consultations (Parking services) Office for National Statistics (ONS) data LGA guidance on local fee setting for regulators (Environmental Health) Feedback from service users, benchmarking with neighbouring authorities and LGA guidance on local fee setting for regulators.
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?

Proposed fee increases across General Fund services have been assessed on a case-by-case basis. The average increase across General Fund fees is 1.99%, which is marginally below the annual inflation rate to August 2026 of 3.1%.

A summary of the key considerations for each service area is provided below.

Leisure and Green Spaces

Most fees have increased by £1 per hour or booking, where applicable. Larger increases generally apply to seasonal or annual bookings and equate to less than £1 per day. Leisure services continue to be subsidised by the Council.

Allotments and Fishing

Allotment fees have increased by an average of 3%, broadly in line with inflation. A modest increase of 3p per square metre is proposed. This equates to only a small additional weekly cost for tenants and would ensure allotments remain a highly affordable leisure activity compared with other hobbies and pastimes. An average 100m² plot currently costs £90 per year. The proposed 3p increase for 2027 would mean the same-size plot would cost £93. This equates to £1.78 per week. Costs associated with allotment provision have increased, particularly due to rising water charges and greater water usage during periods of drought. Water remains included within the annual rent and is not charged separately.

For fishing activities, day tickets and additional rod fees have been frozen, while night fishing permits have increased by £2.

Planning

Most planning fees have increased by approximately 3%. Newly introduced charges, including the Live Planning Application Amendment Service, remain unchanged, as do optional premium services such as the Fast Track Service.

To maintain accessibility, fees for simple and commonly requested services, including the Simple Permitted Development Enquiry and the Standard General Enquiry (20-day response service), have been frozen. This approach balances affordability with the need for financial sustainability.

Highways and Engineering

An average fee increase of 4% is proposed across the service. While slightly above the inflation rate, the majority of users are commercial organisations, including developers and housebuilders, that are generally able to absorb these costs.

A 3.6% increase is also proposed for hourly charge-out rates applied to other local authorities using Stevenage Borough Council services. This reflects increasing employment (for example Pay award) and operational costs while ensuring charges remain reasonable and competitive.

On and Off-Street Car Parking

The average increase in off-street car park charges across the New Town is 1.9%, which remains below the current rate of inflation. Season ticket prices have largely been frozen. The exception is the revised Blue Badge parking arrangement, whereby a new annual administration fee of £30 has been introduced for all car parks (except Railways), replacing the previous £65 annual season ticket. This is expected to have a positive impact on affordability for many Blue Badge holders. Parking charges for all tariff bands of up to one hour have been frozen.

In the Old Town car parks, charges have increased by an average of 4%. However, it should be noted that most fees have increased by only 10p to 20p per tariff band. The larger increases apply primarily to longer-stay parking, with the aim of encouraging shorter stays, increasing parking turnover, and reducing congestion. Charges for stays of up to one hour, as well as season ticket prices, have been frozen.

On-street parking charges across the town centre have been frozen. At King George V Playing Fields Car Park, a £1 charge for up to three hours' parking has been introduced to help ensure that visitors requiring convenient access can find available parking spaces while discouraging excessively long stays. Parking for up to two hours remains free, providing ample time for users to enjoy the park, while the charge for up to four hours has increased by 20p.

At Coreys Mill, parking charges have increased by 10p for one hour (bringing the charge to £2.40), 30p for two hours (bringing the charge to £3.90), and 50p for three hours (bringing the charge to £5.90). Despite these increases, the charges remain substantially lower than those at Lister Hospital, where parking costs £4.10 for up to one hour, £6.00 for one to two hours, and £8.20 for two to three hours. This continues to provide residents with a significantly more affordable parking alternative.

The various parking permit charges will increase by an average of 4.29%. However, it should be noted that Burymead permits have not increased since at least the 2021/22 financial year, and Old Town

permits have remained unchanged since 2024/25. The proposed increase is intended as a cost-recovery measure, reflecting significant rises in both administrative costs and the cost of specialist permit materials. These permits provide an important benefit to local residents by restricting parking in busy areas to permit holders, thereby helping to reduce parking pressures and improve availability for residents.

Finally, H-bar marking fees and parking bay suspension charges will increase by an average of 6.5%.

Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping

Increases have been kept to a minimum, with the only proposed change being a £2 increase in bulky waste collection charges. This maintains affordability for residents while supporting cost recovery and encouraging responsible waste disposal.

All trade waste charges are proposed to be frozen. This supports local businesses across a range of sectors by helping to manage operating costs and maintain access to competitively priced waste services. The proposed fee freeze demonstrates the Council's commitment to supporting business resilience, encouraging economic diversity, and fostering a vibrant local economy, including small and start-up enterprises.

Cemeteries

Fees have increased by an average of 2%, below the current inflation rate. While most chargeable services have risen by around 3%, several areas, including pre-purchased plots, Sanctum cremated remains facilities, and commemorative displays, have been frozen.

Licensing

Most licensing fees have increased between 3% and 4%. Charges relating to pest and vermin control, gambling, scrap metal licensing, and pavement licensing have been frozen.

Some larger increases relate to stray dog services, where charges have been uplifted by inflation (3.5%) and rounded accordingly. The removal of previously waived first-day kennel charges also contributes to higher percentage increases.

Certain taxi licensing fees show larger increases as they represent the second year of phased increases approved by Cabinet in October 2025, combined with an inflationary uplift of 3.5% and rounding adjustments.

	Local Land Charges It is proposed that fees for CON29 search elements increase by 3.5%, with a maximum increase of £5 per search. These charges typically represent a very small proportion of the overall cost of purchasing property or land. LLC1 charges will remain frozen in anticipation of the future transfer of the LLC1 search function to HM Land Registry. Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market To ensure full cost recovery for lease assignment applications, fees have been reviewed to reflect associated professional and administrative costs. External legal fees remain unchanged, building surveyor fees have increased by £175, and internal professional and administrative charges by £100. Charges relating to small land disposals and legal services associated with leases, agreements, and deeds have been frozen to maintain affordability for residents. Town centre trading fees, including charges for outdoor seating, displays, advertising boards, and associated administration, have also been frozen to support local businesses and encourage economic activity. A 3% increase is proposed for indoor market rents. Despite this increase, rents remain highly competitive and continue to be subsidised by the Council. Market licence administration fees will remain unchanged.

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	Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	Low	Most fees have increased by £1 per hour or per booking, where applicable. This increase is necessary to help offset the cost of providing these services. However, it is anticipated that the modest rise in charges will have only a limited impact on residents. Larger increases generally apply to clubs that make seasonal or annual bookings and, when spread across the duration of the booking period, equate to less than £1 per day. The extent to which these organisations choose to pass the additional costs on to their members will vary and remains uncertain		
	Allotments and Fishing	Low	The price increase might affect elderly people on pension credit and young people on low incomes. Holding an allotment is discretionary, and residents use them to grow their own produce, stay healthy, and benefit socially. If a plot holder can no longer afford the allotment, they may downsize to a smaller plot. Discounts are available for those on means-tested benefits.		
	Planning	Low	Most of the applicants will be in a financial position to pay the search fees as these costs will be a tiny percentage of extending/altering a property/land. To support prospective applicants, fees for simpler services, including the Simple Permitted Development Enquiry and Standard General Enquiry (20-day response), will remain unchanged, ensuring access to essential planning advice while balancing cost recovery requirements. Pre-application advice and the Fast Track Service are both discretionary services, with the latter only available where capacity permits. The recently introduced Live Planning Application Amendment Service fee		

			helps manage officer workload by discouraging unnecessary or excessive changes to submitted applications.
	Highways and Engineering	None	
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	Low	Higher parking charges may have a disproportionate impact on some older residents, particularly those on fixed or limited incomes. However, it should be recognised that not all older residents experience financial hardship. Older residents with disabilities or mobility-related needs may benefit from the revised Blue Badge parking arrangement. For eligible car parks, a £30 annual administration fee has replaced the previous £65 annual season ticket, which is expected to improve affordability for many users. It should also be noted that a range of national benefits and support schemes are available to eligible older people to assist with the cost of living and other essential expenses. Furthermore, older residents with care and support needs can apply for free carer permits. These permits allow carers to park within residents' parking permit areas while providing essential care and support services, ensuring that parking charges do not create a barrier to accessing necessary assistance.
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	Low	Most of the services are primarily targeted at trade customers (businesses) rather than individual residents, and eligibility criteria and charges are not based on the characteristics of any individual. The only proposed fee increase is a £2 rise for bulky waste collections of up to three items. However, this service is used relatively infrequently by individual households and is therefore expected to have a minimal impact on household budgets.
	Licensing	Low	The majority of charges are for businesses and taxi drivers. Whilst a fee increase may have a negative impact on certain age group this will be limited and it should be noted the increases are there to bring the service to a break even position. Certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy (i.e. Guaranteed Pension credit).

	Local Land Charges	Low	In the case of CON29 searches, most of the applicants will be in a financial position to pay the search fees as these costs will be a tiny percentage of a purchasing a property/land. LLC1 fees have been frozen.	
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council's services are available to all residents and businesses, where appropriate. Fees and charges are published online and are generally communicated to service users before works commence, ensuring transparency and enabling informed decisions. For each type of service request, the same fees apply to all applicants, except where concessionary rates are available in accordance with Council policy for residents receiving specified benefits. Existing users of ongoing services, such as garages or Estate tenancies, are notified in advance of any changes to fees and charges. In Planning, enquiry fees may be waived in certain circumstances, for example where an older resident requires advice on property adaptations to support their day-to-day living needs. In Leisure, senior memberships, age-specific offers, and affordable junior and community rates are retained and actively promoted to encourage participation across different age groups. Engagement with users of junior football, bowls, and other community activities helps ensure that opportunities remain accessible, supporting health, wellbeing, and social connection		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Leisure: Booking, cancellation and participation trends by activity and age group; use of concessions; feedback from clubs and service users.

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness

Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Neutral impact	
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Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments
	Leisure and Green Spaces	Low	Most fees have increased by £1 per hour or per booking, where applicable. This increase is necessary to help offset the cost of providing these services. However, it is anticipated that the modest rise in charges will have only a limited impact on residents. Larger increases generally apply to clubs that make seasonal or annual bookings and, when spread across the duration of the booking period, equate to less than £1 per day. The extent to which these organisations choose to pass the additional costs on to their members will vary and remains uncertain
	Allotments and Fishing	Low	The price increase might affect people on disability allowance. Holding an allotment is discretionary, and concessions are available for those on means-tested benefits. If the tenant can no longer afford the current plot, they may be able to downsize to a smaller, more affordable plot.
	Planning	Low	Most of the applicants will be in a financial position to pay the search fees as these costs will be a tiny percentage of extending/altering a property/land. To support prospective applicants, fees for simpler services, including the Simple Permitted Development Enquiry and Standard General Enquiry (20-day response), will remain unchanged, ensuring access to essential planning advice while balancing cost recovery requirements. Pre-application advice and the Fast Track Service are both discretionary services, with the latter only available where capacity permits. The recently introduced Live Planning Application Amendment Service fee helps manage officer workload by discouraging unnecessary or excessive changes to submitted applications.
	Highways and Engineering	None	
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	Positive	Higher parking charges may have a disproportionate impact on some disabled residents, particularly those

			on lower incomes. However, the introduction of a £30 annual administration fee for Blue Badge holders in eligible car parks, replacing the previous £65 season ticket (except Railways car parks), is expected to improve affordability for many users. Free carer permits also remain available to support residents with care needs. Where parking charges reduce demand, increased parking availability may further benefit disabled residents who rely on access to convenient parking.
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	Low	Most of the services are primarily targeted at trade customers (businesses) rather than individual residents, and eligibility criteria and charges are not based on the characteristics of any individual. The only proposed fee increase is a £2 rise for bulky waste collections of up to three items. However, this service is used relatively infrequently by individual households and is therefore expected to have a minimal impact on household budgets.
	Licensing	Low	The majority of charges are for businesses and taxi drivers. Whilst a fee increase may have a negative impact on certain disabled group this will be limited and it should be noted the increases are there to bring the service to a break even position. Certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy
	Local Land Charges	Low	In the case of CON29 searches, most of the applicants will be in a financial position to pay the search fees as these costs will be a tiny percentage of a purchasing a property or land. LLC1 fees have frozen.
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	Low	A small portion of Commercial Tenants on the portfolio are charities that operate with disabilities eg physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties and long standing illness.

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council's services are available to all residents and businesses, where appropriate. Fees and charges are published online and are generally communicated to service users before works commence, ensuring transparency and enabling informed decisions. For each type of service request, the same fees apply to all applicants, except where concessionary rates are available in accordance with Council policy for residents receiving specified benefits. Existing users of ongoing services, such as garages or Estate tenancies, are notified in advance of any changes to fees and charges. In Planning, while the Council provides a chargeable pre-application enquiry service, the fee may be waived where a disabled person seeks general advice in relation to extending or adapting their property. Additionally, disabled applicants may be exempt from planning application fees where the proposal relates to works required to meet their needs, in accordance with Central Government Planning Fee Regulations. In Leisure, targeted memberships, facilities, and activities for people with long-term health conditions help reduce barriers to participation, build confidence, and support both physical and mental wellbeing. The Council will continue to maintain and promote programmes for individuals with long-term health conditions, provide reasonable adjustments where required, ensure accessible booking information is available, and clearly communicate concessionary and essential carer arrangements. Community pricing	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Leisure: Usage and complaints from disabled customers; current concessions and carer policy; accessibility of booking, payment and facilities.

	structures also help support inclusive participation in leisure activities.		
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Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	None			
	Allotments and Fishing	None			
	Planning	None			
	Highways and Engineering	None			
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	None			
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None			
	Licensing	None			
	Local Land Charges	None			
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Marriage or Civil Partnership					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Neutral impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments
	Leisure and Green Spaces	None	
	Allotments and Fishing	None	
	Planning	None	
	Highways and Engineering	None	
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	None	
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None	
	Licensing	None	
	Local Land Charges	None	
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None	
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		Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	None			

	Allotments and Fishing	None	
	Planning	None	
	Highways and Engineering	None	
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	Low	Pregnant women may be more likely to attend the hospital, and therefore disproportionately affected by price rises there but charges help to improve availability of spaces for all visitors and are still at a substantial discount to the Hospital car park.
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None	
	Licensing	None	
	Local Land Charges	None	
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None	
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		Neutral impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments	
	Leisure and Green Spaces	None		

	Allotments and Fishing	None	
	Planning	None	
	Highways and Engineering	None	
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	None	
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None	
	Licensing	None	
	Local Land Charges	None	
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None	
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	X	Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	Low	Faith groups may hire pavilions, meeting rooms, parks, and sports pitches for regular activities and events. Most fees have increased by £1 per hour or per booking, where applicable, to help offset the cost of providing these services. Given the modest nature		

			of the increase, it is anticipated that the impact on faith groups will be limited and should not present a significant barrier to accessing Council facilities.
	Allotments and Fishing	None	
	Planning	None	
	Highways and Engineering	None	
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	None	
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None	
	Licensing	None	
	Local Land Charges	None	
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Leisure: Use consistent and transparent community-rate criteria and engage faith groups that regularly hire facilities.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Leisure: Use of affected venues by faith groups, the frequency of bookings and any affordability concerns or cancellations.

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	None			
	Allotments and Fishing	None			
	Planning	None			
	Highways and Engineering	None			
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	None			
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None			
	Licensing	None			
	Local Land Charges	None			

	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None		
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		Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	None			
	Allotments and Fishing	None			
	Planning	None			
	Highways and Engineering	None			
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	None			
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None			
	Licensing	None			
	Local Land Charges	None			
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Care Experience¹

e.g., residents that spent more than 13 consecutive weeks (up to age 18) in care

[Further guidance on this new group can be found in the linked toolkit]

Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	Low	Care-experienced young people may face financial disadvantage and could be more affected by increased charges for sport or community activity. The KGV PlayZone partner and community rates, which may range from free to £20, provide a potential mitigation.		
	Allotments and Fishing	None			
	Planning	None			
	Highways and Engineering	None			
	On and Off-Street Car Parking	Positive	Carers parking permits are provided free of charge in permit areas to support those with care needs at home.		
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	None			
	Licensing	None			
	Local Land Charges	None			
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	None			

¹Although non-statutory, the Council passed a motion to include Care Experience as a protected characteristic and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with care experience.

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy. Work with relevant youth and care-leaver services to use partner or community rates for inclusive programmes and clearly explain eligibility.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Current use by care-experienced residents and organisations supporting them; whether existing community-rate criteria meet their needs.
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Socio-economic² e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to	Service	Impact	Comments		
	Leisure and Green Spaces	Low	Most fees have increased by £1 per hour or per booking, where applicable. This increase is necessary to help offset the cost of providing these services. However, it is anticipated that the modest rise in charges will have only a limited impact on residents. Larger increases generally apply to clubs that make seasonal or annual bookings and, when spread across the duration of the booking period, equate to less than £1 per day.		

²Although 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.

support this assessment			The extent to which these organisations choose to pass the additional costs on to their members will vary and remains uncertain
	Allotments and Fishing	Low	The price increase might affect residents with socio-economic disadvantage who receive benefits, although concessions are available for that purpose. Holding an allotment is discretionary. Around 9% (78 out of 870) of plot holders are on a concessionary rate. However, many of these have multiple plots; 10 have multiple plots and could return them if unaffordable.
	Planning		The risk of changes to planning fees disproportionately impacting residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage is considered to be low. Residents in this group are generally less likely to undertake significant development projects, which often involve expenditure of many thousands of pounds. In such cases, planning fees typically represent only a small proportion of the overall project cost. Consequently, any proposed fee increases are unlikely to be a determining factor in whether development proceeds. To support prospective applicants, fees for simpler services, including the Simple Permitted Development Enquiry and Standard General Enquiry (20-day response), will remain unchanged, ensuring access to essential planning advice while balancing cost recovery requirements. Pre-application advice and the Fast Track Service are both discretionary services, with the latter only available where capacity permits. The recently introduced Live Planning Application Amendment Service fee helps manage officer workload by discouraging unnecessary or excessive changes to submitted applications.
	Highways and Engineering	None	
	On and Off-Street Car Parking		Any increase in parking charges has the potential to have a greater impact on residents who are already experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, and for some individuals this may affect the affordability of parking. However, the town centre benefits from good accessibility through a range of alternative transport options, including public transport, walking and cycling routes. Furthermore, parking charges in locations surrounding Lister Hospital will remain significantly lower than those charged within the

		hospital's own car parks and therefore remain below the prevailing market rate for comparable parking provision. Existing and proposed parking charges represent only a small proportion of the overall cost of vehicle ownership and use. Evidence also suggests that lower-income households are less likely to own or regularly use a car. More broadly, the costs associated with maintaining and supporting the road network and wider transport infrastructure exceed the revenues directly generated from motorists. As a result, motoring benefits from wider public expenditure funded through general taxation, including contributions from non-motorists. It is also recognised that some protected characteristic groups are statistically less likely to own a vehicle and may therefore be less directly affected by parking charge increases. The Council recognises that increases in resident permit and visitor voucher charges may have a greater financial impact on some households, particularly residents on lower incomes and those with additional care, health or mobility needs. A number of measures are already in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts and to ensure that essential parking requirements continue to be met. Residents who hold a valid Blue Badge are entitled to a free resident parking permit and will therefore not be affected by the proposed permit fee increases. This exemption helps ensure that residents with disabilities or long-term mobility impairments can continue to access parking without incurring additional financial burden. Residents who require regular medical or social care support may apply for free carers' permits, allowing carers to visit and provide essential assistance without being subject to parking charges. In addition, professional carers, community healthcare staff and other eligible medical practitioners can obtain permits free of charge when visiting patients in their homes. These arrangements help ensure that vulnerable residents continue to receive necessary care and support services without being adversely affected by changes to parking permit charges. The Council has also undertaken benchmarking against neighbouring authorities, which demonstrates that current permit and visitor voucher
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			charges are generally lower than those charged elsewhere for comparable parking schemes. Even after the proposed increases, charges will remain proportionate when considered alongside regional averages and the increasing costs of administering, operating and enforcing the parking service. Following implementation, the Council will continue to monitor the impact of the revised charges and consider any evidence of disproportionate effects on particular groups. Information relating to free permits, concessions and other available support will remain readily accessible to ensure that residents who require assistance are able to benefit from the support mechanisms already in place. Whilst the proposed fee increases may result in a modest financial impact for some residents, the Council considers this impact to be proportionate and justified in light of rising administration, enforcement and operational costs. Importantly, specific mitigations are available for disabled residents, those requiring medical or social care support, and the healthcare professionals and carers who assist them. Consequently, no disproportionate adverse impact on individuals sharing protected characteristics has been identified, and the overall equality impact is considered to be low, with appropriate mitigation measures in place.
	Trade Waste, Bulky Waste, Skips and Third-Party Tipping	Low	Most of the services are primarily targeted at trade customers (businesses) rather than individual residents, and eligibility criteria and charges are not based on the characteristics of any individual. The only proposed fee increase is a £2 rise for bulky waste collections of up to three items. However, this service is used relatively infrequently by individual households and is therefore expected to have a minimal impact on household budgets.
	Licensing	Low	The majority of charges are for businesses and taxi drivers. Whilst a fee increase can have a negative impact on socio-economic disadvantaged group, it should be noted the increases are there to bring the service to a break even position. While the increases are not targeted at any particular group, some individuals and small businesses may experience a greater financial impact. The overall equality impact is assessed as low. The proposals are considered to be a proportionate and reasonable approach to ensuring that the Council can continue to provide effective regulatory services while

			recovering the costs of service delivery. The Council will continue to monitor the impact of fees and ensure that services remain accessible through reasonable adjustments, accessible information and appropriate support where available. Some services offered to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy (i.e. Universal Credit).	
	Local Land Charges	Low	In the case of CON29 searches, most of the applicants will be in a financial position to pay the search fees as these costs will be a tiny percentage of a purchasing a property/land.	
	Estates, Town Centre and Indoor Market	Low/Medium	The majority of Commercial Tenants on the commercial portfolio are local independent businesses. The majority of fees and charges have been frozen to maintain affordability, support accessibility to Council services, and encourage economic activity within the town centre. A 3% increase in indoor market rental fees has been proposed. However, it should be noted that indoor market rents are currently subsidised by the Council and remain highly competitive. The proposed increase represents a modest contribution towards inflationary and energy cost pressures while continuing to provide good value for market traders.	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council's services are available to all residents and businesses, where appropriate. Fees and charges are published online and are generally communicated to service users before works commence, ensuring transparency and enabling informed decisions. For each type of service request, the same fees apply to all applicants, except where concessionary rates are available in accordance with Council policy for residents receiving specified benefits. Existing users of ongoing services, such as garages or Estate tenancies, are notified in advance of any changes to fees and charges.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

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Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Neutral impact	
Please evidence the data and information 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)			

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Service Managers and Staff, Commercial Team, Finance Team Discussions with Shared Legal, Property Services and Team Members regarding the costs, time, workload and inflationary pressures for dealing with applications and cases	Residents?	Leisure: Residents and the wider public were engaged through the Healthy Stevenage Strategy consultation. Proposals for new facilities are also subject to public consultation.
Voluntary & community sector?	Leisure: Community and voluntary groups were engaged through the Healthy Stevenage Strategy consultation. New-facility consultation also includes affected community groups and businesses.	Partners?	Leisure: Partners and businesses were engaged through the Healthy Stevenage Strategy consultation. Everyone Active supplied benchmarking for pitches, bowls and athletics; Football Foundation approval remains required for KGV PlayZone pricing.

Other stakeholders?	Leisure: Sports and bowls clubs, venue hirers, schools, event organisers and businesses are engaged through service channels and consultation on new facilities. Feedback will continue to inform annual reviews.
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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		
Negative / neutral impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	The proposed fee increases apply consistently to all applicants and are intended to support the recovery of costs associated with delivering statutory, regulatory, and discretionary services. While the increases are not targeted at any particular group, it is recognised that some individuals and small businesses may experience a greater financial impact depending on their personal circumstances. Overall, the equality impact is considered to be low. The proposals represent a proportionate and reasonable approach to maintaining service delivery while ensuring that the Council recovers an appropriate level of the costs incurred in providing these services. The Council will continue to monitor the impact of fees and charges and will seek to ensure that services remain accessible through reasonable adjustments, accessible information, and appropriate support where available. In addition, concessionary rates are available for certain services, in accordance with Council policy, for residents who are in receipt of specified benefits. These arrangements help to support affordability and accessibility for those on lower incomes.

	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?
Monitor the cost of providing services to ensure that fees and charges continue to recover an appropriate proportion of Council costs, minimising the need for subsidy except where there is a clear and justifiable reason to do so. This will support the Council in addressing its ongoing financial sustainability challenges.	Promote equal opportunity Encourage good relations	Finance and Commercial Team	August 2027	Review service costs and associated fees and charges annually as part of the Council's Fees and Charges setting process.
Continue to monitor service uptake and, where possible, analyse the characteristics of service users to identify whether any groups are disproportionately or adversely affected by changes to fees and charges. Where impacts are identified, consider appropriate mitigation measures to improve accessibility and affordability.	Promote equal opportunity Encourage good relations	Service Managers	Ongoing	Incorporate protected characteristic, equality, and affordability considerations into routine performance monitoring and business-as-usual reporting processes, ensuring that any emerging issues are identified, monitored, and addressed where appropriate.

Approved by Director: Atif Iqbal

Date: 09/09/2026

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