

## NFNPA 521/17

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### AUTHORITY MEETING – 23 MARCH 2017

#### PLANNING FEES

**Report by:** Steve Avery, Executive Director Strategy and Planning, and Nigel Stone, Chief Finance Officer

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 21 February 2017 the Authority received a letter from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as attached at **Annex 1**. The letter contains an offer to all Local Planning Authorities in England to increase planning fees by 20% from July 2017 on the condition that the additional funds are re-invested in the planning service.

#### 2 Response

- 2.1 A 20% increase on planning application fees for this Authority would equate to around £50,000 a year, however as this will not be enacted until July 2017 the additional fees for 2017/18 would likely be around £40,000 – this of course assumes the volume of transactions does not change from the expected amount.
- 2.2 Given the recent increases in planning application numbers and therefore workload, it is felt that this additional funding could be very timely to re-invest into the planning service to provide necessary additional staffing resources to the team. The exact details would need to be considered by Officers and Members over the coming months.
- 2.3 It should be noted that in our most recent planning cost benchmarking exercise, that the fees themselves only covered approximately 40% of the costs of determining the applications. Should this 20% uplift be applied, this figure will still be below 50% of the total costs. This proposal is not therefore a 'profit-making' or even 'cost-covering' increase and the Authority will still continue to have to use a significant portion of its Defra grant to cover its planning functions.
- 2.4 The date for replies to the DCLG letter was 13 March 2017; however Officers received agreement from DCLG that we could provisionally agree to the increase at that time, subject to final confirmation at this meeting.
- 2.5 The Authority will await details of the second proposal contained in the letter (fourth paragraph) that a further 20% increase on top of this could be applied for by those authorities who deliver the homes their communities need.

## **Recommendation**

**That the Authority formally accepts the Government's offer to raise planning fees by 20% from July 2017, with the additional income being re-invested in the Authority's planning service.**

## **Equality Impact Assessment:**

There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report.

## **Contact:**

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