



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Simon Gallagher
Director of Planning

Department for Communities and Local
Government

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Chief Executives of Local Planning
Authorities in England
[Via Email]

21 February 2017

Dear Chief Executive,

Planning application fees: the Government's offer

'Fixing our broken housing market' was published on 7 February 2017. It includes proposals for boosting local authority capacity and capability to deliver, improving the speed and quality with which planning cases are handled, while deterring unnecessary appeals.

As set out paragraph 2.13 of the White Paper, developers consistently tell us that the lack of capacity and capability in planning departments is restricting their ability to get on site and build. Alongside funding, local authorities also report difficulties in recruiting and retaining planners and others with specialist skills. There may also be wider capacity and skills issues for local authorities. To boost local authority capacity and capability to deliver, paragraph 2.15 explained that the Government will **increase nationally set planning fees**. Local authorities will be able to increase fees from 20% from July 2017 if they commit to invest the additional fee income in their planning department.

This letter invites you confirm your intention in relation to the fee increase. It is intended that the additional revenue should be retained by planning departments and that existing baseline and income assumptions will not be adjusted down as a result during this Parliament. This is an opportunity for all authorities to make improvements to their resourcing, leading to better services, improved performance, and greater capacity to deliver growth as set out in *'Fixing our broken housing market'*.

'Fixing our broken housing market' proposes a further increase of 20% for those authorities who are delivering the homes their communities need. This would also be on the understanding that the additional fee income generated will be invested exclusively in planning services. We will consult further on the detail of this proposal and the timing on it being brought forward.

For your authority to benefit from the higher planning application fees, we require your section 151 officers, under s230 of the Local Government Act 1972, to provide a commitment and submit information of the 2017/18 budget that demonstrates the additional fee income being spent on planning services. Annex A sets out details the information required.

Should your authority not wish to charge the increased fee, the existing fee structure will remain in place. Where authorities do accept, but do not comply with the assurances it has

provided, the Secretary of State will consider reducing the fee level for that authority back to the original fee level through a change in regulations.

Annex B includes a template for section 151 officers to sign and return. Replies should be sent to planningresources2@communities.gsi.gov.uk by Monday 13th March. It is important that a response is received from all local authorities; indicating whether or not the increased fee offer is to be accepted. You are also asked to confirm the correct legal name of your authority at Annex C, and return this with the template in Annex B. This will be used in the statutory instrument bringing forward the fee increase.

I would be grateful if you could forward a copy of this letter to s151 officers and the officer with lead responsibility for planning services within your authority.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S.J. Gallagher', written in a cursive style.

Simon Gallagher