

## Licensing and Appeals Committee

25 March 2026

### Part 1 - Public

#### Matters Taken Under Delegated Powers



Cabinet Member	N/A
Responsible Officer	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services
Report Author	Linda Hibbs, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services

#### Amendment of Licensing Fees and Charges 2026/27 – Pre-application advice

##### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The responsibility for setting the licensing fees and charges for 2026/27 is with the Licensing & Appeals Committee. This report gives details of the proposed amendment to the licensing fees and charges for 2026/27 in respect of pre-application advice.

##### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Licensing Services ensure that all licensable activities taking place within the borough are granted the appropriate permissions under the relevant legislation.

##### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is RECOMMENDED that the proposed scale of fees for pre-application advice as set out in paragraph 5.1 of this report be adopted with effect from the 1 April 2026 and that these supersede the pre-application advice fees agreed on 26 November 2025.

##### 4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 This Committee approved fees for licences, consents and registrations for 2026/27 at its meeting on 26 November 2025. Included within that were a set of fees for pre-application advice as set out below.

## Current fees and charges – pre-application advice

	2026-27	Sevenoaks	Maidstone	Tunbridge Wells
Small application - up to one hour of advice	£62		Up to 1 hour £80	Up to 1 hour £80
Medium application - up to two hours advice	£135		Site visit 1 hour – £100	Site visit 1 hour – £107
Large application - up to four hours advice	£260		Minor variations – £38	Minor variations – £38
Events up to 1000 capacity includes the cost of specialist officers and site visits.	£374		Assisting and completing applications and advice for	
Events between 1001 and up to 1999 capacity includes the cost of specialist officers and site visits.	£520		Transfer/Variation of DPS / Personal Licence – £40	
Events between 2000 and up to 4999 capacity includes the cost of specialist officers and site visits.	£728		TEN - £15	
Events 5000 people or more includes the cost of specialist officers and site visits.	£1,040			

- 4.2 There was some debate at Management Team before the fees and charges paper was presented to the November 2025 Committee regarding the meaning and use of this pre-application service and an action was taken away to further consider this. Members are reminded that the licensing service has recently become part of the wider Regulatory Services (including Environmental Protection and Food & Safety teams) within the Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services directorate and it is a natural part of this change to review existing approaches.
- 4.3 A review of the approach confirmed that no charges have been levied for pre-application advice to date. There has not been the demand for this service in any formal way (nor are there any procedures in place to facilitate it). Given the lean resourcing of the licensing team there is a concern about promoting pre-application advice further and then it becomes unmanageable on top of other licensing priorities.
- 4.4 It is recognised that there may have been some informal support provided to some smaller organisations as part of the normal course of the work and it is felt levying a fee for this would be a barrier for some e.g. small charities. The large events commonly have agents in place who will make the licence application and are experienced in doing so. Clearly for events on Tonbridge & Malling land/property the internal Events Team offer support.
- 4.5 The licensing team do currently offer a “check and send” approach where they will give the opportunity for the applicant to send a form in to check it is correct. There is currently no charge levied for this service.
- 4.6 Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells licensing teams were contacted to confirm their approach to pre-application advice and the following was noted.

**Maidstone**

*“We didn’t get any uptake this year and probably have received 4/5 since it was introduced in 2020. When pre-application advice is paid for there is no problem with the application and that all saves time. We always give general overall advice on initial enquiry but refer them to our pre-application pages if they contact us again with questions. I think it’s a good idea offering pre-application advice.”*

**Tunbridge Wells**

*“We do use pre-application advice and have generated some income – it works well as when the application final arrives, it’s correct which helps us enormously. I would say in the last year – approximately 4/5, however when we receive any queries, we tend to now respond with I can only give you a brief overview, you will need pre-application advice. It has increased year on year.*

- 4.7 Both these authorities have a simple charging structure for pre-application advice – an hourly rate, a site visit fee and a minor variations service (assessment of whether application suitable as minor, suggestion on wording of proposed conditions, help to complete application etc)
- 4.8 The Council does not currently advertise any pre-application advice service on our website whereas other local authorities do have this information.

**5 Proposal**

- 5.1 It is proposed that the pre-application advice fee structure is simplified to the following:

- Hourly rate for advice for licence applications - £62
- Site visit – up to one hour - £80
- Check and send service up to 30 minutes - £31

- 5.2 The hourly rates above are based on the fees and charges that had been agreed at the Licensing and Appeals Committee in November 2025.

**6 Other Options**

- 6.1 Members could decide to leave the pre-application fees as agreed in November 2025 however as has been explained this seems overly complex compared to neighbouring authorities and no fees under this structure have been levied to date.

**7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 7.1 The recommended fee levels for licensing are calculated to ensure that the service remains self-financing, whilst at the same time not making a profit.

## **8 Risk Assessment**

8.1 None arising from this report.

## **9 Legal Implications**

9.1 None arising from this report.

## **10 Consultation and Communications**

10.1 There is no requirement to consult on these proposed amendments.

## **11 Implementation**

11.1 Agreed fee increase will take effect from the 1 April 2026.

11.2 Internal procedures to support the practical use and implementation of pre-application advice and associated fees will be developed.

11.3 Information regarding pre-application advice will be added to the Council's website.

## **12 Cross Cutting Issues**

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

12.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.

12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

12.3 Other If Relevant

- None

Background Papers	None
Annexes	None