

E-PLANNING CONSULTATION

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Planning applications generate around one million consultation requests per year: from Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to a wide range of consultees including national agencies, regional bodies, highways departments, parish and town councils, amenities societies, utility companies and the citizen.
- 1.2 These consultations are often paper-based and can be expensive, time consuming and inefficient for each LPA and consultee to handle.
- 1.3 To help improve this process, and to complete the e-Planning process, the Planning Portal is launching a new e-Consultation Hub which will enable all the stakeholders in the planning process to complete their consultations online .

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 As a part of the ongoing stakeholder consultation the Planning Portal is inviting opinions and comment from Parish and Town Councils and is hosting an online questionnaire on e-Consultation and how it may affect our work.
- 2.2 The online questionnaire closes to responses on Tuesday 13th May 2008. The responses will be used by the Planning Portal to help them engage with Parish and Town Councils and help address any issues which may arise.
- 2.3 The first 18 questions of the questionnaire relate to how we currently view and respond to planning applications and are tick box responses. The final two questions are as follows, and are open for comment:
- i) What issues would you see as barriers to take up of e-Planning in the Town and Parish Sector?
 - ii) How can e-Planning help enhance engagement in the Planning Process?

3. RESPONSE

- 3.1 The Council has recently moved over to projecting planning applications at Committee meetings with mixed success. Unlike many smaller Town and Parish Councils we have the necessary equipment in place and a Broadband internet connection to enable the process.
- 3.2 As a result of this experience, it is suggested that the following comments are included in the Council's response to the consultation:
- It is more difficult to interpret electronic plans than paper copies currently supplied (some features drawn on paper plans do not show up on the electronic versions, particularly if the document is scanned in black and white)
 - The majority of Town and Parish Councils will not have the ability to print large plans (the maximum size this Council can print is A3)
 - It is awkward to visualise the full extent of applications that include several plans.
 - It is difficult to compare amended or revised applications to previous applications.
 - Downloading plans so that they can be viewed off-line in Committee meetings is an onerous task, particularly for large applications with several plans.
 - The ability to view additional comments at the time applications are considered, such as those from other consultees and members of the public, will be beneficial.
 - Town and Parish Councils may no longer need to keep separate records to the LPAs.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is RECOMMENDED that Members agree a response to the Planning Portal questionnaire, based on the suggestions in paragraph 3.2 above and any additional comments that are raised at the Committee meeting.

For further information, please contact Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk on 01425 473883 or jo.stannard@ringwood.gov.uk.