

Briefing Note on the Transition to Electronic Communication

Planning application process

Improving our service to Town and Parish Councils

Over the last few years there has been a considerable increase in the number of residents and businesses choosing to submit planning applications online and around 70% of all applications received by Bath and North East Somerset Council are now made this way.

As it makes little sense for the council to receive planning applications electronically only to then print these out in paper in order to carry out consultations. This has a significant financial cost to the Council and is also a poor use of resources.

A number of Parish councils have requested to only be consulted on information electronically, and the feedback we have received has been very positive.

A number of Town and Parish Councils have invested in Laptop, Projectors and Screens so that planning applications can be easily discussed in meetings.

Summary of the process

Electronic system	Paper system
Clerk notified by email as soon as planning application is registered.	All applications sent by post in hard copy with notification letter and plans after registration, takes 5-7 days.
Parishes respond with comments via Email to Development_control@bathnes.gov.uk and comments reach planning officer on day of receipt.	Respond with comments writing by post. Can take up to 2 days from receipt to reach the planning officer.

Parish clerk able to view all applications online and access copies of their responses.	Clerk needs to keep their own system of recording responses to applications and store all hard copies of plans.
Email notification of decisions issued and decision notice available instantly online.	Decision notice sent by post, takes 5-7 days

To summarise, the electronic process enables quicker notification of applications and decisions, councils will receive notifications ahead of neighbours and they can also track and review applications online reducing the need to store printed copies

Proposed change

As of Monday 2nd September 2013 all planning application consultations with Town and Parish Councils will be sent out electronically. All Town and Parish Council are requested to consider the application electronically and then respond with their comments via email. Comments submitted via fax will no longer be permitted and the fax number for Planning will cease being used. For major planning applications the Clerk can request the Planning Information officer send out a hard copy of the plans.

Support

Training can be provided to clerks if requested and we will produce a guidance note for Town and Parish Councils.

Feedback

At the end of six month period we will carry out a survey with Town and Parish Councils to make sure that the move to a new way of working with electronic communication has been successful. If additional training, guidance or other support is identified this will be rolled out.