

Update Briefing Note on the Transition to Electronic Communication

Planning application process

Improving our service to Town and Parish Councils

Background

In 2013 Officers presented a briefing Note to the Liaison Meeting around the suggestion that due to the increased number of planning applications that are now submitted on line, 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.

A number of Parish Councils have requested to only be consulted on information electronically, and the feedback we have received has been very positive. And a number of Town and Parish Councils have invested in Laptop, Projectors and Screens so that planning applications can be easily discussed in meetings. A number of Parish Council's raised real concerns about the proposed process at the Liaison meeting and consequently it was agreed that a consultation period would follow in order for views to be collated.

This consultation raised the following points:-

Several Parish Councils expressed the view that they would like to move to electronic consultations but:-

- No internet access in the village
- Lack of equipment and resources to procure this
- Concern around the ability to read plans, especially in the case of large applications
- Concern about looking at plans whilst on site
- Concern about measuring from electronic plans

Proposed Next Steps

In order to provide some support, guidance and training it is proposed that a workshop or workshops are planned. In a straw-poll of 23 Parish Councils regarding paperless consultation on Planning Applications relating to a hands-on workshop - the result was -

1. In favour of a hands-on workshop (or perhaps several) - about 17.
2. No need for a workshop, we do it already - about 3.
3. Not interested, we don't intend to agree to go paperless - about 3.

Action

Officers will arrange a workshop (s) and invite Parish Council representatives to attend with a view to supporting more Council's to move to electronic consultation.