

## ***Report to Local Council Liaison Committee***



***Date of meeting: 6 March 2014***

**Subject: Electronic Presentation of Parish and Town Council Plans**

**Officer contact for further information: Peter Millward (Ext 4338)**

**Democratic Services: R Perrin**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1). The current ratio of electronic planning applications received by Epping Forest District Council is over 40% (as compared to the national average of 75%). It is expected that the percentage of electronic applications will increase in 2014 - 2015 to over 60%. This means that the costs of copying, printing and distributing of paper copies of electronic planning applications received by Epping Forest District Council is no longer sustainable.**
- (2). As a result from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014 no further paper copies of plans received electronically will be able to be distributed to Parish/Town Councils**
- (3). Planning and Economic Development intend to fund the provision of a limited amount of small projectors. This is to assist the smaller Parish Councils to support them to be able to present Planning Applications electronically and is subject to a maximum value of £4 000.**
- (4). Any equipment purchased for Parish Councils will form a grant to the Parish Councils concerned and that specifically Epping Forest District Council will not be responsible for the maintenance and/or replacement of any equipment provided. In some cases due to limited funding available, Planning and Economic Development may ask some Parish Councils to share projector equipment.**

### **Summary**

This report highlights the difficulties being experienced by Planning and Economic Development in printing and distributing paper copies of plans and documents received electronically to Parish and Town Councils.

There are indications that this is likely to significantly increase in 2014. As a result due to resource and cost implications it will no longer be sustainable to distribute plans submitted electronically in paper format to Parish/Town Councils.

Nationally the Planning Portal is promoting the Smarter Planning Initiative to encourage local authorities, planning professionals and their agents to move towards paperless planning.

### **Report**

- 1. That the submission of electronic planning applications from the National Planning Portal comprises nationally of over 75% of all planning applications and there are indications that this may rise to over 80%. The current ratio of electronic planning applications for Epping Forest District Council while currently over 40% is expected to increase to over 60% in the next twelve months. For example the total electronic planning applications received**

nationally across the country reached the one million mark in February 2012 and increased to over one point five million in November 2013.

2. The ratio of electronic to manual planning applications is increasing every year and currently 41% of all planning applications are submitted electronically.

CALENDAR YEAR	TOTAL PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	ELECTRONIC PLANNING APPLICATIONS VIA PLANNING PORTAL	% OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA PLANNING PORTAL
2009	2389	446	18.7%
2010	2484	685	27.6%
2011	2572	809	31.5%
2012	2389	896	37.5%
2013	2615	1070	40.9%

3. With the national average percentage of electronic planning applications currently at 75%, the National Planning Portal have advised that they are pushing forward with their Smarter Planning Initiative to encourage professionals and local planning authorities to fully realise all the benefits of online working.
4. All electronic applications received are currently copied, printed and distributed to Parish and Town Councils by Planning and Economic Development. Due to resource and cost implications it will no longer be sustainable to distribute plans submitted electronically in paper format to Parish/Town Councils in the future.
5. It is proposed that from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014 no further paper copies of plans received electronically will be distributed to Parish/Town Councils.
6. However Planning and Economic Development intend to support Parish/Town Councils through this process and it is proposed to fund the provision of a limited amount of small projectors to assist the smaller Parish Councils in presenting Planning Applications electronically. This funding in total is limited to a maximum of £4 000.
7. Any equipment purchased for Parish Councils will form a grant to the Parish Councils concerned and that specifically Epping Forest District Council will not be responsible for the maintenance or replacement of any equipment provided. In some cases due to limited funding available, Planning and Economic Development may ask some Parish Councils to share projector equipment.

#### **Reason for this report**

As a result of the increasing national trend to submit planning applications electronically Epping Forest District Council is no longer able to sustain the costs of printing and distributing paper copies of planning applications received electronically to Parish/Town Councils.

**Consultation undertaken:** N/A

**Resource implications:** Planning and Economic Development are no longer able to sustain the costs of distributing paper copies of planning applications received electronically.

**Background papers:** None