

Date of meeting: 3 November 2011

Subject: Joint User Group for IPlan

Officer contact for further information: Peter Millward (01992 56 4338)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the report regarding the Joint User Group for IPlan be noted.

Joint Working iPlan User Group

1. At a meeting of the Essex Association of Local Councils, Epping Forest Branch held at Ongar Town Offices the following Parish and Town Council representatives were nominated to participate in the iPlan User Group.
 - (a) Richard Witham – Lambourne Parish Council
 - (b) Brian Surtees (or Marie Hatch) – Ongar Town Council
 - (c) Joan Bowerman – Matching Parish Council
 - (d) Chris Pond – Loughton Town Council
 - (e) Adriana Jones – North Weald Parish Council

These representatives will be participating in meetings with Planning and Economic Development Officers with the Business Manager Peter Millward assisted by a representative group of officers within the Directorate.

2. The first meeting was held on 25th July 2011 between the nominated representatives and the Business Manager Planning and Economic Development assisted by five officers who were responsible for different elements of Planning Information that is regularly placed in iPlan on the Corporate EFDC Website.
3. At this meeting the following terms of reference were agreed;
 - (a) Record and receive feedback regarding any difficulties that Parish/Town Councils may be experiencing in using iPlan.
 - (b) Investigate and report back to the User Group regarding progress or lack of progress made in resolving difficulties raised in using iPlan.
 - (c) Compile an action plan list of all issues raised in order to resolve difficulties raised and identify those issues that may only be resolved utilising additional resources.
 - (d) Suggest future improvements to iPlan and Electronic Website Planning Records in order to assist Parish/Town Councils in moving from paper planning records to greater use of electronic website planning records.

- (e) Invite Parish/Town Councillors, Parish Clerks and other Parish/Town Council staff to participate in work based placements within Planning and Economic Development in order familiarise themselves with Planning and Economic Development in Epping Forest District Council.
- (a) To liaise with ICT to enable iPlan to be compatible for use with Google Chrome, Firefox and other recognised internet search engines.

Training in iPlan to take place in the ICT Training Suite in the Civic Offices

4. As formalised training on iPlan is not currently possible due to resource implications, it was decided as part of item 3 (e) above, that an alternative plan of action be implemented by inviting groups of Councillors and/or Staff from Parish Councils to visit Planning and Economic Development in Epping. The purpose of this is to enable Parish/Town Councils to gain a greater awareness of all Planning processes from application stage through to placing Planning Applications onto the Corporate EFDC Website.
5. Five Parish/Town Councils have participated to date as follows;
 - (a) North Weald Bassett, a member of staff was placed within our Planning Directorate for five days on the 20th/27th July and 3rd/10th/17th August 2011.
 - (b) Loughton Town Council a member of staff was placed within our Planning Directorate for three days on 31st August and 7th/14th September 2011.
 - (c) Sheering Parish Council spent the morning familiarising themselves with elements of Planning and iPlan on 22nd September 2011.
 - (d) Stapleford Abbots Parish Council spent the morning familiarising themselves with elements of Planning and iPlan on 11th October 2011.
 - (e) Theydon Bois Parish Council spent the morning familiarising themselves with elements of Planning and iPlan on 19^h October 2011.

Positive feedback has been received from all participants and it is proposed that further efforts will be made to encourage more Parish and Town Councils to visit EFDC Planning and Economic Development to promote a greater emphasis on partnership working between Parish/Town Councils and Epping Forest District Council.

6. In addition, the Development Control Team has allocated officers to local council's as a point of contact for Development Control/planning application matters. So far, Officers have in the last few months attended parish council planning meetings at Chigwell, Stanford Rivers, Theydon Bois and Stapleford Abbots to discuss matters ranging from pre-application enquiries, permitted development, approaches to considering Green Belt household extension (from which Officers informal advise is due to be shortly issued) and validating requirements/concerns of plans."

Reason for this report

To report the progress made and provide feedback in terms of the setting up of the iPlan User Group as requested by the Local Council Liaison Committee on 9th March 2011.

Consultation undertaken: N/A

Resource implications: N/A

Personnel: N/A

Background papers: N/A