

Rye Town Council

From: "Tim Hickling" <Tim.Hickling@rother.gov.uk>
To: "Richard Farhall" <ryetowncouncil@btconnect.com>
Cc: "Roger Scott" <Roger.Scott@rother.gov.uk>
Sent: 28 January 2010 08:10
Subject: RE: Rye Town Council meeting 8 Feb, 6.30pm
Richard

I stated in my email

"This I would positively encourage, and indeed for ease we will shortly be publishing the contact details of all planning officers on the website."

Can you please substitute the above with:

This I would positively encourage, and indeed for ease we have sent all the parish/town councils and local agents a list of the contact details of the planning officers in development control.

Many Thanks

Tim Hickling MRTPI, MCMI

Head of Planning

Rother District Council

Town Hall

Bexhill-on-Sea

East Sussex

TN39 3JX

Tel 01424-787651

Fax 01424-787657

www.rother.gov.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Farhall [mailto:ryetowncouncil@btconnect.com]
Sent: 27 January 2010 18:23
To: Tim Hickling
Subject: RE: Rye Town Council meeting 8 Feb, 6.30pm

Hello Tim

Thank you for this full response!

Best wishes

Richard

From: Tim Hickling [mailto:Tim.Hickling@rother.gov.uk]
Sent: Wed 27/01/2010 14:38
To: Rye Town Council
Cc: Tony Leonard; Richard Wilson; Roger Scott
Subject: RE: Rye Town Council meeting 8 Feb, 6.30pm

Richard

Thank you for your email dated 25th January, and your kind offer to attend the Town Council meeting to discuss this item; unfortunately I am unavailable that evening. I would however be happy to discuss any further issues that arise from your meeting at a later date.

I would like to take this opportunity to state Rother District Council value Rye Town Council's input in the planning process and in particular their comments on the planning applications submitted, providing an important link between Rother and the citizens of Rye.

I would also like to comment on the two suggestions submitted by Keith Taylor of the Campaign for a Democratic Rye.

Professional planning officer input on planning applications across the district is split into 2 equal area teams with expertise to cover all types of applications. The East Team, managed by Richard Wilson, is centred on Rye to include its surrounding parishes. Therefore Rye does have a specific contact in Richard Wilson who can draw on 3 other planners, design/conservation/tree expertise, and technical support. I have discussed this matter with Mr Wilson, who assures me that he has regular contact with Rye Town Council and encourages RTC to contact him if there are any queries. This I would positively encourage, and indeed for ease we will shortly be publishing the contact details of all planning officers on the website.

Rother deals with approximately 2,200 planning applications per annum including 40 major applications (defined as an application of 10 or more residential units or 1,000 sq.m of floor space). In Rye (Jan to Dec 2009) 114 applications including 1 major application were determined; this amounts to 5% of the total planning applications workload of the district. The majority of planning applications in Rye tend to be domestic or minor proposals or detailed listed building applications. I consider that it couldn't be justified in resource terms to employ an experienced planner solely covering Rye (5% of the district workload) dealing with predominantly minor matters with the

28/01/2010

occasional major scheme. . Planning applications are currently allocated within the east team on the grounds of site history, officer capacity, and complexity of scheme.

I now turn to the second issue with regard to providing professional advice at Rye Town Council. The planners are employed by Rother District Council as the Local Planning Authority to make recommendations to the Council or determine applications under the delegation scheme. There are two issues that I consider pertinent to Mr Taylor's suggestion. Firstly the issue of probity of the officer in terms of advising RTC on an application that he or she will be determining on behalf of RDC as the local planning authority. Secondly there is the issue of resources; despite a downturn in the economy we are a "lean" division and do not have the resources to provide this service for Rye and indeed to all other parishes. For your information when we have had spare capacity we have prioritised resources and redeployed planners to work in the Local Development Framework. However, it is likely in years to come that our resources will be scrutinised further with particular regard to the Government's value for money agenda and desire to reduce the public deficit. Rye is, however, entitled to independent professional advice and could employ it's own professional advisor.

In summary I am not aware that there are issues with regard to the relationship between the Development Control section and Rye Town Council, I understand from Mr Wilson that he has regular telephone conversations with members of RTC on various planning issues and believes this system works well. However, if there are specific areas of concern eg communication then please contact me further and I would be happy to investigate.

Many thanks

Tim Hickling MRTPI, MCMI

Head of Planning

Rother District Council

Town Hall

Bexhill-on-Sea

East Sussex

TN39 3JX

Tel 01424-787651

Fax 01424-787657

www.rother.gov.uk

CHANGING THE PLANNING SYSTEM FOR RYE

For many small towns in Britain the planning system works badly. The public feels excluded from the decision making processes and lacks adequate consultation. This is especially the case for small, historic towns like Rye which are rightly very concerned to retain their architectural heritage and tourist appeal.

Such towns are under threat not just from traffic congestion and further development but also from the recent extension of planning powers from regional government. Henceforward, proposals for airports, new roads and windfarms can be "fast tracked" to completion with the minimum of local objection.

Rye is very vulnerable. The Udimore Road fiasco is unlikely to be the only planning disaster to affect Rye in the near future. Nevertheless we believe that actions can be taken to avoid and mitigate problems in the future, even *within the existing planning framework*

.

The current planning procedure

Most Councillors will only be too well aware of the limitations of the current system.

As is well known decision making is based on the District Council in Bexhill with Rye and its Town Council only having an advisory role. For planning purposes, the District is divided into two, an Eastern and a Western zone each with its team of officers. Rye along with 16 other parishes belongs to the Eastern zone.

A number of officers may deal with the affairs of Rye although there may be some overall supervision from the team leader no one appears to be specifically allocated to Rye and its problems.

Interactions with the Public- Parish and Town Councils

A very large amount of time at Parish Council meetings is taken up with planning matters before these are dealt with by the District.

There seems to be considerable diversity in approach but informality and full public discussion appears to be general.

In **Battle**, planning meetings are held as separate morning events. All who wish to speak are allowed to do so.

District Councils.

In Rother, the public may attend Planning Meetings , but they are not generally allowed to participate. By contrast, most District Councils allow public comment at meetings provided notice is given in advance .This is the case at Ashford .

The Case for Change

We believe that there is now a very persuasive case to change the planning system for Rye and we would wish to see this happen as soon as possible. The present system does not recognise the status of Rye as a major international tourist centre based on its cultural and historical background. It is also imperative that local people have a much greater say in deciding their future.

Our suggestions for change are as follows.

- 1. That a Planning Liaison Officer be specifically designated for Rye** by the District Council . Such an officer would attend many though not all of the Town Council's planning meetings, and would report back to Rother. The officer would be available for consultation by those living in Rye. This need not involve extra expenditure by the District Council but some administrative rearrangement. (Officers already travel to Rye for planning purposes as does the full District Planning Committee on occasions. These journeys could be dispensed with).
- 2. That changes take place in the procedure of planning meetings at Rye Town Council.**

Planning meetings in Rye Town Council should be divided into two categories.

Minor items, eg. Windows and kitchen extensions could be dealt with much as now. Nevertheless there must be much greater emphasis on public debate where this is necessary and during the time an agenda item is being discussed by Councillors.

Major items, eg. Larger buildings, libraries, schools, large scale housing developments . These should occupy a single session. In this developers, objectors, and other interested parties would be allowed to

make their case before the Town Council Planning Committee discussed the matter and recorded their vote. Public engagement in these discussions would be encouraged as would the views of interested and knowledgeable local groups such as the Conservation Society. The Planning Liaison Officer who would be present at these meetings, would relay local views to the District Council.

We hope that our suggestions will stimulate early discussion with the District Council about changing the planning system as it affects Rye. Change is vital for Rye's future.

Keith Taylor- on behalf of the Campaign for a Democratic Rye and its Advisory Group.