

Questionnaire July 2011

Introduction

Further to our very successful Planning Parish Seminar I would like to gauge both your views and realistic expectations about existing and future electronic communication between Rother District Council Planning Division and your Town or Parish. I would therefore appreciate if you can spend a few minutes filling in the attached questionnaire

Context

Currently the Planning Division sends out electronic communication to the Parish Councils in the form of the planning application weekly list & the planning enforcement weekly list; this will soon be extended to include electronic planning decisions (Sept 2011) and appeal decisions (July 2011). The majority of Strategy and Enforcement work is also sent out in the form of electronic communication.

For several years the Government has actively encouraged agents to submit more and more of their planning applications electronically using the Planning Portal website. There are a number of authorities who now receive up to 80% of their applications online, albeit RDC is much less around 30% (but growing). The implications to RDC for this are twofold:

On the positive side it allows LPAs to upload planning documents onto their website for public viewing (and comment) much quicker and cost effective (ie no need to scan the documents from paper submission) than previously. It also allows RDC to consult relevant bodies by email containing a hyperlink to the online application file rather by post. This gives consultees longer time to consider their comments (no delays in the post).

Secondly on the downside if the LPA require any hardcopies of a planning application for consultations etc there is a printing cost (eg. approx £3 to £5 **per A1/A0 sheet**) and when multiplied by approx 1,500 applications per year this is a significant cost.

Whilst all RDC consultees are now consulted electronically the Parishes continue to receive a hard copy of the application sent by post.

With the significant reduction in Council support Grant LPAs are looking to retrieve costs wherever possible and for this reason we are now seeking Parish & Town Council views regarding the current arrangements for sending out hardcopies of all applications. Can you please return the questionnaire to Tim Hickling at tim.hickling@rother.gov.uk by **31st July**.

1 **Name of Town or Parish Council:**

2 **Does your Town or Parish Council have Broadband Connectivity?**
(Please delete as appropriate)

Yes*

No

*** if yes what is the broadband speed?**

3. **What IT equipment is accessible to the Parish Council?**
(Please delete as appropriate)

Laptop

Desktop PC

Broadband

Printer (size of paper)

Scanner

Screen

Projector

LED/LCD/Plasma screen

4 **Do you visit application sites as a Parish Council?**
(Please delete as appropriate)

A. Always

B. Never

C. Sometimes

If answer is "**sometimes**" can you approximate the percentage of sites you visit and what criteria are used to trigger the need to visit.

5. **Does the Parish or Town Council have any comments about the current level of electronic communication they receive from RDC Planning Division?**
6. **As we move further into the digital world at a time when speed and cost of communication is increasingly important how does your parish wish to receive information on new planning applications?**
(Please delete as appropriate)
- A. Receive hardcopies in the post
 - B. Receive electronic weekly list with hyperlinks to documents
 - C. Receive hardcopy of plans only and hyperlink to associated forms and documents
 - D. Receive a "weekly" CD of applications either plans only or the full documents.
 - E. Any other suggestion
- 7 **Local Authorities are seeing their Council support Grants being severely reduced and Rother is no exception; and therefore LPAs are looking to retrieve their costs wherever possible. If RDC was willing to provide (or maintain) the suggested services in A, C or D in Question 6 would your Parish be:**
(Please delete as appropriate)
- A. Willing to pay the costs
 - B. Not Willing to pay the costs
 - C. Any other comments

8. Rother is looking to embrace technology particularly where it reduces costs and improves speed and delivery of service. Would your Parish/Town Council be willing to:

(Please delete as appropriate)

- A. Take part in a 6 month trial
- B. Permanently receive full electronic communication
- C. Any other comments or alternatives

Thank you for help and cooperation in taking part in this survey

Tim Hickling
Head of Planning
Rother District Council