

Officer actioned recommendations in respect of review work in respect of: -

- d) Communication**
- e) What Is, and Is Not Working Well and**
- f) General Comments.**

From the observations received from a number of parish and town councils under these three headings there is clearly room for improvement in the acknowledgement process, general consultation and on consultation on amended plans in particular. (There is also a widespread belief that due weight is not being given to the comments these consultees make in the application process.)

The review generated a total of twenty four recommendations under these headings, many of which require relatively minor and straightforward changes to operational procedures or documentation. Because of their nature most of these recommendations have, or are in the process of being actioned.

Where the recommendations have not been implemented, this is mainly because the current IT systems do not have the flexibility to deliver what is required, or if they do, the cost of making changes to the software is prohibitive at a time when the service is in the process of upgrading to a new single IT platform.

d) Communication

It is recommended that the following takes place:-

1. Officers investigate and offer electronic circulation of planning agendas to parishes which would like them if it can be done at a reasonable cost. If current IT constraints preclude this, to endeavour to secure this facility as part of any software upgrade.
2. Provide more information on standardised consultation proformas to make it clear what the purpose is, and who to contact if there are any queries. If the consultation is on amended plans, the nature of the actual amendment should be readily apparent. The proformas, (paper and electronic), should be reformatted and automatically populated with all necessary information including the full application number and consultation response date, (there should be no handwriting).

3. As and when the IT is available, offer parish and town councils the option to receive the weekly list of applications registered or only those for their parish/town.
4. Harmonise the variety of consultation end dates as far as feasible as part of the lean review process (member, parish, neighbour notification, press advert and site notice).
5. Harmonise the dispatch of the planning lists and consultation on the actual plans themselves.
6. Harmonise the consultation process on amended plans as follows:-

Amendments submitted pre-decision	
Non material amendments to a scheme which do not affect anyone.	No consultation but the plans to be placed on the web site.
Major change which does not affect anyone.	No consultation if no-one affected but plans to be placed on the web site.
Major change which affects people.	Re-consult the neighbours and parish/town/city councils but giving them 14 days to respond rather than 21.
Amendment requests made post-decision	
Non material change which does not affect anyone.	No notifications but plans placed on file and web site.
Major change.	Will require submission of a new planning application.

7. Harmonise the notification process to try and ensure that everyone who made representations on a 'committee application', including town/parish/city councils and applicants/agents are given five clear working days notice of the date of the meeting.
8. Provide more information to parishes on contact details for extension of time requests but clarify that extensions are at the discretion of the Council.
9. Add a 'No Objection' box to the parish consultation response forms
10. Enable an e-mail 'auto response' so that parishes always know that their observations have been received by the service.

11. Where there will be a Section 106 Agreement drawn up, officers should discuss the implications with the parish/town council if it involves community benefits, (as opposed to items such as contributions to off site sewage works or technical highway matters).
12. Harmonise notifications sent to Members in the north so they also receive a list of decisions made under delegated powers.

e) What Is, and Is Not Working Well

It is recommended that the following takes place: -

1. Information on the availability of planning applications for public inspection at parish and town council venues should be incorporated into notification correspondence when IT permits. (Parish and town councils would have to opt into this service.)
2. Investigate inserting electronic links to core policy documents referred to in any development service correspondence.
3. Investigate the ability of current or proposed IT to allow parish and town councils to choose the geographic area from within which they are consulted on planning applications. – i.e. only their parish or a wider geographic area.
4. The Spatial Planning Team to ensure there is member involvement in any policy decisions on community infrastructure levy, S106/policy.
5. Clarify the statutory role of parish and town councils in the planning process in Wiltshire Council documents – they are statutory consultees whose views have to be taken into account.
6. Investigate inserting an electronic link in the delegated lists to decision notices to make finding/printing them easier.
7. Investigate providing the details of consultees to parish and town councils at the time they are consulted on new application. (This would have to be part of any new IT package.)
8. The start time of the Area Committees remains 6pm.

f) General Comments

It is recommended that the following takes place:-

1. Ensure the review of the enforcement process addresses the parish desire to be notified of all enforcement investigations within their parish and the outcome.

2. Revise the wording/content of para 11.g of the Planning Code of Good Practice to clarify the local Division Member role at committee.
3. If Members have concerns about a planning application they should seek to discuss their reasoning with the case officer prior to the meeting.
4. The names of officers, including highway officers attending meetings should be recorded in the minutes although this has not been the convention of the Council in the past.