

Modernising Planning Service Report

Appendix A – Member Notification and Open Dialogue processes

Description of technology support systems:

Uniform – Planning application processing system

Planning Portal – Website where electronic submission of planning applications can be made

Public Access – Website where planning applications can be viewed, tracked and comments can be made

e-mail alerts – this is an internal system to provide Members with information for consideration. This may be tailored to member requests and allow for briefing updates on proposed decisions. Any response is a matter for the Member concerned

Dialogue:

Protocol and Pro formas – These are constitutional requirements in the interest of good governance

Pre-application meetings – Ward Councillors may attend with officers but any discussion between officers and Councillors is after the developer has left. The meetings are confidential. The formal advice of the Council as Planning Authority can be disclosed as Environmental Information, in accordance with guidance of the Information Commissioner.

Parish Council meetings – Parish Councils are statutory consultees for their areas and may have such meetings with applicants for Planning Permission, or with objectors or the public at large as they think fit

Informal meetings – Members of the Planning and Development Control Committee declare under the adopted Local Code of Conduct contacts with objectors and applicants and must not be biased in favour or against an application. Ward Councillors who take a firm advance position on an application should not be part of the Committee determining the application. Informal meetings can be very positive in resolving issues and reducing costs and uncertainty. Good practice is for an officer to attend.

Site meetings – These are in advance of the Committee meeting to enable the Committee to be informed of the existing situation and site context of all applications.

Enforcement enquiries or complaints – Enquiries or complaints may be made in confidence.

Objectives:

The Council seeks to adopt best practice of transparency, fairness and efficiency. All elected Members have public responsibilities and as Ward Councillors take up planning concerns for enforcement, attend pre-application development meetings with officers and are able to call-in planning applications for determination by Committee. Positive dialogue may reduce costs and uncertainty. Members of Planning Committees are trained and are bound by codes of conduct which apply only to Planning matters and may need in some circumstances to distance themselves from dialogue on matters which may come before the Committee.

Brief Overview:

Planning applications are received on a daily basis and are either manually entered on to the Uniform system or if they are submitted via the Planning Portal they are automatically entered on to Uniform. Once a planning application is received and entered, a validation process is followed ensuring that all the information has been provided in order to validate the application, following National guidance. If further information is required, a letter is sent via e-mail to the applicant or their agent requesting the missing information in order to make the application valid.

Once a valid date is entered on to Uniform the application is now published on Public Access, the submitted documents should be viewable the same day if not the following working day.

Process:

1. At first you will need to register on Public Access, of which guidance notes and training will be provided. Once you are registered, a search of valid planning applications within your ward will be undertaken and saved. A search would need to be saved in order for you to receive daily e-mail alerts of any new valid planning applications within your saved search criteria.
2. Planning applications always have a valid date entered before neighbour notifications are undertaken and this would result in you being notified of a valid planning application before the local residents are notified.
3. If you would like to receive an e-mail alert of any valid applications within the Borough or on a particular site, this is also possible, by saving a further search.
4. At present the e-mail alerts are sent at 9pm daily.
5. The inputting of the valid date is mandatory when validating a planning application and therefore it is unlikely that you will not receive an alert of a valid planning application.

6. The same day, if not the following day, the planning application documents should be viewable on line.
7. You can also track the progress of any planning application. Tracking the progress will then provide you with e-mail alerts on status updates throughout the progress of the planning application i.e such report writing and decision outcome.