CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL

4 December 2012

Cabinet

Report of the Chair of the E-Planning Facilities Scrutiny Review Task Group

Scrutiny Review of E-Planning Facilities

Summary

1. This report sets out the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review into E-Planning Facilities. A copy of the full Final Report is at **Appendix 1** to this report and Councillor Runciman, the Chair of the Task Group who undertook the work around this topic, will be in attendance at the December Cabinet meeting to present the report.

2. Cabinet are asked to endorse the recommendations arising from the review.

Background to Review

3. At a meeting of Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2012 Members considered a suggested scrutiny topic around E-Planning Facilities that had been submitted by Councillor Wiseman.

4. After consideration of the topic registration form and a briefing note prepared by the Head of Development Management the Committee decided to progress this topic to review to *'ensure that the Council had in place a user friendly and up to date E-Planning Portal.'* They agreed to form a Task Group[1] comprising of three Members of the Committee to undertake the work on this review.

5. Over a series of meetings the Task Group gathered the evidence set out in **Appendix 1** and its associated annexes and listened to all the concerns voiced. However, it soon became apparent that there was no 'one size fits all' solution to many of the issues raised. The Task Group therefore settled on a more generic approach when preparing the recommendations arising from the review. As a result the following recommendations arose:

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[1] The Task Group were: Councillor Runciman, Councillor Semlyen and Councillor Watt

i.   That City of York Council officers provide a comprehensive training course for Parish Councils and Planning Panels on E-Planning facilities before March 2013; (initially offering 2 sessions at different times and thereafter a minimum of once a year)

ii.   That City of York Council provides a named officer that Parish Councils and Planning Panels can contact if they have any questions about using E-Planning facilities. Similarly that Parish Councils and Planning Panels have a named person for officers to contact by e-mail.

iii. That the Head of Development Management , in conjunction with this Task Group, one Planning Panel representative and one Parish Council representative, develop a good practice guide which once completed be:

   • Reviewed annually

   • Circulated to all Parish Council and Planning Panel Clerks

   • Made available on City of York Council's website

iv. That a room within West Offices and/or in local libraries be made available (within advertised opening hours) for use by Parish Councils and Planning Panels if they wish to use it and any room to offer audio visual equipment for their use (and where possible a PC or laptop).

v.   That the option to request a paper copy of plans for larger applications remain (a set of criteria to be produced by the Head of Development Management against which a request will be judged)

vi. That officers continue to explore with IDOX the possibility of providing the function to download all documents associated with a single planning application as one PDF file. An update on how this is progressing to be provided to Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee three months after these recommendations have been approved by Cabinet and thereafter on a six-monthly basis until this has been resolved.

vii. That the Communities and Equalities Team ask those Parish Councils which are currently successfully using E-Planning to offer demonstrations to other Parish Councils and Planning Panels as to how to 'get the best out of E-Planning' or to invite others to attend their meetings to view how E-Planning facilities can be used effectively.

viii. That the Communities and Equalities Team liaise with the Yorkshire Local Council's Association to resolve outstanding issues brought to their attention.

ix. That the Administration and Business Support Manager ensures that all plans uploaded on to the E-Planning system have a good enough line density to enable them to be clearly viewed.

x. That the Administration and Business Support Manager reviews the processes and timescales for uploading additional documentation received in relation to planning applications to ensure that all information is uploaded onto the Public Access Website within a reasonable timeframe.

xi. That the Head of Commissioning, Design and Facilities and the Head of Libraries, Information and Archives explore ways of potentially offering rooms for use in both West Offices and local libraries at minimum cost to Parish Councils and Planning Panels.

Planning Panels

6. Whilst gathering evidence for this review several concerns were raised around Planning Panels. The Task Group felt that whilst not 100% within the remit of this review these issues were important and needed to be addressed. As such they wish to make the following additional recommendation regarding Planning Panels:

xii. That the Monitoring Officer investigate the Constitutional status of Planning Panels and report back to Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the end of the 2012/13 municipal year on:

- What authority, if any, the Council has in relation to Planning Panels
- What support, if any, City of York Council should give to Planning Panels
- If Planning Panels do remain, then to look at ways they can work in a more transparent and accountable way (e.g. published membership, transparent and public meetings, public agendas and minutes and declarations of interest)

Consultation

7. As part of the review process consultation took place with Parish Councils, Planning Panels and officers of the Council.

Analysis

8. Analysis of the evidence gathered is contained within the body and the analysis sections of the full final report at **Appendix 1**.

Council Plan 2011-15

9. E-Planning facilities are, amongst others, used by members of the Public, Parish Councils and Planning Panels. The Building Strong Communities priority in the Council Plan has a commitment to Community Engagement stating that '*we will introduce new ways for residents to interact with the Council using new technologies and improving communications'.*

Options

10. Having considered the final report at Appendix 1 and its associated annexes, Cabinet may chose to amend and/or approve or reject the recommendations arising from this review as set out in **paragraphs 5** and **6** of this report.

Implications

11. Implications are set out in **paragraphs 80 to 87** of the full final report at **Appendix 1**

Risk Management

12. There are no known risks associated with the recommendations within this report, however it is important that as many issues with the Public Access Website are addressed as soon as practicably possible in order that Parish Councils, Planning Panels and the public can be confident that all documentation has been uploaded in a timely manner and the system is as user friendly as possible.

Recommendations

13. The Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee ask the Cabinet to:

    i.   Note the contents of the final report attached

    ii. Consider the recommendations as shown at **paragraphs 5 and 6** of this cover report.

    Reason: To fully inform the Cabinet of the outcome of the review

Contact Details

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Report Approved ✓   **Date** 22.11.2012

Wards Affected: All ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Appendix 1 – Final Report