

Task Group Discussion with Attendees on 3rd August 2012

1. Question from Parish Council/Planning Panel: The new system will cost more, are you making a room available at the Guildhall for Planning Panels to use? Will any room do, as the meetings are quite long? Will the room need to have an internet connection? Can CYC lend us equipment every three weeks? What savings will it make?

Response from officer: There are significant postage costs associated with sending out planning documentation so there will be a large saving there. Unfortunately, no one solution or model will fit all, there will be different issues and challenges for the different Parish Councils and Planning Panels.

This is about a new way of working that is being driven nationally - the Local Authorities do not have a choice in this but we do need to make it work as smoothly as we can

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Our Planning Panel Chair collects all documentation directly from CYC so we do not create any postage costs for CYC

Comment from Councillor Runciman: Room hire could be easier once we move to West Offices. Would it be possible to use CYC equipment and rooms when we get there?

Response from officer: It should be easier at West Offices but we would need to check what times the building would be open in (think it will be 7am to 8pm but need to clarify)

2. Question from Councillor Watt: Not familiar with Planning Panels and where and how they meet

Response from Guildhall Planning Panel: We meet here at the Guildhall once every three weeks and are provided with a room and equipment

3. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Plea from smaller Parish Councils – as an example Acaster Malbis has about 10 applications a year (less than one a month) so we don't have premises or storage. Could you consider still consulting us by sending us paper copies please? This would

be far more economical for us than buying laptops and projectors.

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel (2): Similar in Copmanthorpe and Askham Richard. The Parish Council has a very small precept and it would not be cost effective to buy expensive equipment which then sat in a cupboard for most of the time.

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel (3): Hessay Parish Council do not receive many applications – the cost of purchasing the equipment for e-planning would outweigh the benefit

4. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Currently meet at Church Hall with no computer or internet provision. Could move to meet at the library but would need help from CYC as we would need to use the library out of hours

Response from Planning Panel (2): Don't have a great volume of business so don't meet often. Do a lot of business by e-mail. No facilities where we do meet.

5. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Micklegate Planning Panel collects all documentation directly from CYC so that they do not incur any postage costs. The Planning Panel are aware that CYC needs to save money. We meet in Clementhorpe Community Centre and there are no IT/computer facilities there.

Unlike Parish Councils Planning Panels do not have their own budgets to pay for room hire and/or equipment. Some Planning Panels already pay for room hire from their own pockets and use their own personal broadband to download documentation. Downloading large documents can take a significant amount of time - potential issues around how much time Planning Panels/Parish Councils are expected to give up to do this. Each Planning Panel Member looks at the applications individually and then we come together to discuss them as a Group - this is much easier to do with paper copies rather than doing electronically

Question from Councillor Runciman: How do you get on a Planning Panel?

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Through the Ward Committee – about once a year there is an item on a Ward Committee agenda.

Question from Councillor Runciman: Do you get access to the same training as Parish Councils?

Response from Planning Panel (1): Yes we do get notification of training and some Planning Panel members go and find it useful

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Also need to consider broadband download limits – if you exceed these then you get a hefty bill. In Guildhall Ward, for example, we get quite a lot of applications and there are many documents to download

6. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Concerned that there don't appear to be standard procedures for considering planning applications. There seem to be differences between Parish Councils and Planning Panels. Are there any specific requirements that need to be met at these meetings? Feel there is a need to be consistent, especially as York is split between Parish Council and Non-Parish council areas

Response from officer: We will talk to colleagues in the Council and confirm this

Comment from Councillor Runciman: This is something that the Task Group may need to look into further as part of this piece of work

7. Question from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Are applicants going to have to abide by the same format? Will the same format be used for both large and small applications:

Response from officer: Yes, effectively the same format will be used by all applicants and for all applications no matter what the size of the application. At the moment about 40% of all applications are received electronically.

8. Question from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Once an application has been submitted who will notify the Planning Panel or parish Council of the return dates for comments?
Response from officer: You will be notified by e-mail and the letter that forms part of that e-mail will contain that information – the information will also be on the public access system

9. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Dringhouses Planning Panel plan to use the library to meet in and access documentation once the new system is introduced, however this will incur costs, especially for printing out documents. As has been mentioned before Planning Panels do not have a budget to cover this
Comment from Councillor Runciman: The Task Group notes that unlike Parish Council, Planning Panels do not have a precept/budget

10. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: When this was first mentioned it was presented as a cost saving. But it is not a saving for a Parish Council it is a cost increase. Without an increase in the Parish precept many Parish Councils would not be able to afford to buy equipment (which we had originally been told would be provided). We have already been asked by CYC to consider reducing our precepts rather than increasing them.
Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: We could not consider putting up the Parish precept in the present economic climate

11. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Have we got any guidance on what the cost of a projector etc might be? The Task Group should look at this. CYC should at least part fund the costs of buying the equipment needed

12. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Heslington Parish Council is often asked to look at massive applications for the University with huge plans and extensive documentation.

For applications of this nature then we *must* have paper documents

Response from officer: If an applicant chooses to submit an application on line then we cannot ask them to also provide paper copies of plans and documentation

13. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Elvington Parish Council introduced E-Planning about 6 months ago and it works really well. It has not cost us anything to implement. We can view documentation in PDF format and side by side on a screen to compare amended plans

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel (2): many Parish Councils/Planning Panels do not have internet access at the places they meet in. There may be a necessity to look at alternative meeting places such as schools

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel (3): Only possible to view documentation side by side if you have the right version of windows (Windows 7)

Question from Parish Council/Planning Panel: How did you implement at zero cost?

Response: we already had the equipment

14. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: We appear to be developing a system that is driving the process rather than supporting the process. As this is driven nationally how much of this is a done deal? If paper documents are more suitable for certain applications then we should be allowed to have these
15. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: We would need a projector/overhead that increased the size of A4 plans so that we could see them in detail
16. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Traditionally we have kept a written record of all applications over the years. Now we are losing paper records we need to know that we will be able to go online and access complete records from

previous applications that we may need to refer to. There is no reason why these (or parts of these) should drop off due to FOI.

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Problem is not being able to see revisions online as these are not always made publically available. Should be able to access website five years on and see a complete application. When comments are originally submitted it is known they are publically available - no reason why they should then disappear

Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Parish Councils didn't always receive paper copies of revised documents anyway

Response from officer: Should be able to see revisions online – please report any further problems and we will look into this

Comment from Councillor Runciman: The Task Group may need to find out what we are required to do nationally and what we can do legally

17. Question from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Will printers be provided for 'hefty' documents such as sustainability documents and design and access statements that often accompany Listed Buildings Applications?

Response from officer: If individual Parish Councils and Planning Panels want to print off documentation then they would need to organise this themselves

18. Question from Councillor Semlyen: How are the fees for putting in applications decided? could these be raised and the extra monies put towards topping up the Parish Precepts

Response from officer: The fees are set nationally and we cannot ask for additions. The Secretary of State has indicated that he may raise fees by 15%

19. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: The monies saved on postage could be given back to Parish Councils and Planning Panels to buy the equipment they will need

20. Question from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Does CYC charge for pre-planning advice? Could the money raised from this be given to the Parish Councils?
Response from officer: The monies collected from pre-planning advice pay the salary of the officer who gives this advice, so it would be difficult to re-locate these monies and retain the pre-planning advice service
21. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Useful to have a minimum specification for laptops and screens etc. CYC could bulk buy the equipment and we can buy it back
22. Question from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Will any room do or will we need to hire a room with internet access?
Response from officer: Internet access is useful but documents can be downloaded prior to a meeting and put on a memory stick
Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: That would mean someone using their own broadband
Response from officer: Libraries can be used to do this
Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Many Parish Councillors and Planning Panel Members also have full time jobs – this will take up a lot more of their time
23. Comment from Parish Council/Planning Panel: Problems with quality of some PDFs. Sometimes once printed off they are illegible
Response from officer: If documentation illegible then we would send this back to the applicant and ask for an improved copy