

Update on Parish Protocol for Parish Forum

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to update the Parish Forum on the development of the parish protocol for planning and S106 matters.

Context

The original planning protocol was issued for consultation in August 2014, since then there have been a number of changes which need to be incorporated into our planning approach. These include the development of Neighbourhood plans and the implementation of pooling restrictions. These developments impact on the ability to levy and use S106 receipts.

The consequences of these issues are currently being worked through to determine the Council's future approach to S106. We are planning to hold a workshop for parish and town councils on these issues and the potential consequences in September.

Key Elements/ Issues

Parish and town councils will be aware that the new Service Director for Planning and Transport has been working on the improvement of the planning service over the last 7 months, which incorporates a requirement to engage with stakeholders in an effective manner over future planning applications. The parish and town council engagement on planning applications will incorporate discussions on possible S106 requirements and the council encourages planning applicants to speak with town and parish councils on their proposals before formal planning applications are submitted.

The parish protocol outlined the requirement to share information more effectively with parish and town councils both for ongoing S106 agreements and for those applications pending. In order to meet this requirement we are currently developing a new web-based system, which we expect will make it easier to produce reports and provide stakeholders with information quickly and easily, including the details of the S106 committed and available. This system will also highlight pending applications. We anticipate that the system will be populated with historical data during the rest of 2015 and should be fully operational by early 2016.

As reported at the last Parish Forum we have been collecting information from a variety of stakeholders in order to develop a new Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document. This process is also considering the implications of CIL and pooling restrictions. We have experienced some delays in getting feedback from stakeholders and are currently in the process of agreeing a new timetable for producing the draft document and issuing it for consultation. Despite the delays we are aiming to start consultation in the autumn. A formal 12 week consultation period with parish and town councils will be followed but in advance of that we are keen to 'test' the proposed new policy with stakeholders, including a few parish and town councils. Following the last Parish Forum we have received one expression of interest in participating in this process.

We are continuing to work closely with parish and town councils to allocate current S106 receipts and we have found that the rate of development has increased the level and value of receipts available in the current year. During 2014/15, £14m of s106 was allocated to spend or spent on various projects. This included approximately £500,000 which was handed to Town and Parish Council's or local community groups to deliver local projects.

Formalising a Parish Protocol

We are still working on the processes to support some of the aspects of the parish protocol, and it is recognised that the implementation timescale was longer than originally planned. However, we would like to incorporate agreed standards into the overall parish protocol, rather than having a separate planning document. So, the work will continue to improve the way we engage with parish and town councils, and the processes to support this in an effective manner. This work incorporates feedback from the original consultation.

In the intervening period, Parish Councils have been consulted on new applications within their areas when a s106 agreement is required to ensure their views are represented and providing they are CIL compliant, they have been supported and negotiated as part of the s106 requirement. Further, Parish Councils have been offered s106 funding which is available in their area for them to spend directly on local projects.

This will then be captured in the revised Parish Protocol, rather than having a specific agreement for planning.