

Deferred from Cabinet of 3 June 2020 as per Cabinet Decision [D200034CAB](#)

Item PE 20/4 referred from Planning and Transportation Advisory Board of 3 March 2020

Following feedback from consultees and stakeholders on engagement processes the report provided an update on Development Management with a view to ensuring parity and improving efficiency and effectiveness. If approved, the proposals could result in savings to support the Borough Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, support the Borough Council's commitment to the Climate Change and Digital Strategies and create service efficiencies that enabled planning applications and decisions to be dealt with in a timely way.

Members recognised the value in reviewing internal working practices to ensure that the development management function was delivered efficiently for the benefit of residents and applicants. In particular, Members welcomed the proposals around notification deadlines, validation dates and the use of 'List B' to trigger the commencement of the 21 day notification period. Members also supported the principle of stricter measures being in place to reduce last minute amendments to planning applications

However, concern was expressed that the proposals represented a significant challenge for parish councils, who would have to adapt their current practices to adopt the changes. To support parishes through this process Planning Officers would actively engage with parish councils (and other interested parties) to understand the issues and concerns around the proposals and to identify potential digital solutions. It was not the Borough Council's intention to prevent anyone from engaging in the planning process.

It was also intended to hold a number of training sessions, working in partnership with the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) and the Parish Partnership Panel to support parish councils in using digital tools such as the Public Access portal and My Account to keep informed of planning applications in their area. There would be a transition period from 1 June 2020, during which the approach would be tested and there would be discussions between planning officers and parish councils to identify any issues.

Finally, reference was made to late representations and the need to retain flexibility around any information received to ensure that fundamental matters were addressed when considering a planning application.

Members discussed the proposals in detail and Officers responded to concerns, comments and questions raised.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed changes to process, set out in the report and detailed below, be agreed:

- (1) from 1 September 2020, the Borough Council will not accept representations on applications received after the relevant 21 day period from any party not included in the statutory (technical) consultees definition (as set out in

paragraph 1.2.9 of the report). It would, however, be recognised that there could be exceptions to this where fundamental matters were raised outside the period, which could leave the authority open to legal challenge or raised new material considerations.

- (2) from 1 September 2020, the Borough Council will notify Parishes via the weekly List B and they will have 21 days from then within which to make representations (as set out in paragraph 1.2.12 of the report) and therefore the provision of hard copies of planning applications to Parish Councils will cease and they will be required to view relevant papers online (as set out in paragraph 1.2.12 of the report);
- (3) the savings derived from changes to how Parish Councils will be notified will contribute to both the Savings and Transformation Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (as set out in paragraph 1.2.14 of the report);
- (4) from 1 September 2020, amendments to planning applications will not be accepted, other than where the changes sought were considered to be 'de-minimis', correct errors or discrepancies identified by officers or where a Planning Performance Agreement was in place that provided for such amendments to be negotiated between the parties (as set out in paragraph 1.3.7 of the report); and
- (5) progress on the proposals will be updated at the meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board scheduled for 28 July 2020.

***Referred to Cabinet**