

<b>Key Decision Required:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>In the Forward Plan:</b>	<b>No</b>
-------------------------------	-----------	-----------------------------	-----------

## CABINET

10 August 2011

### REFERENCE FROM THE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY COMMITTEE

**A.1 WITHDRAWAL BY PLANNING SERVICES OF THE PROVISION OF OVERHEAD PROJECTOR SLIDES IN RESPECT OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS THAT ARE REFERRED TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS**  
(Report prepared by Jan Osborne)

#### PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

##### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To report and consider the comments of the Service Development and Delivery Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011 relating to the withdrawal by Planning Services of the provision of overhead projector slides in respect of Planning Applications that are referred to Town and Parish Councils.

##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Service Development and Delivery Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011 considered the decision made in April 2011 to cease the practise of providing Brightlingsea, Harwich and Dovercourt, St.Osyth and Frinton and Walton Town/Parish Councils with overhead projector slides in respect of Planning Applications received by the Planning Service.

The Committee resolved that:-

- (a) That the Council be informed that St.Osyth Parish Council has objected to the withdrawal of the provision of acetates (overhead projector slides) in respect of planning applications that are referred to Town and Parish Councils as part of the planning consultation process on the grounds that the Parish Council feels that this is a significant reduction in the service provided by this Council to Town and Parish Councils in return for a comparatively minor saving.
- (b) That Cabinet be further informed that, in the opinion of this Committee, the withdrawal of the provision of the acetates (overhead projector slides) service should be reconsidered in view of the comments made by some Town and Parish Councils.

##### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Cabinet notes and considers the comments made by the Service Delivery and Development Committee.**

#### PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

##### **DELIVERING PRIORITIES**

The decision to withdraw the provision of overhead projector slides in respect of planning applications that are referred to Town and Parish Councils is in keeping with the spirit of the E-

Planning Agenda and the ethos of the Council to streamline service provision by becoming more efficient.

#### **FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK**

There will be cost implications associated with re-instating provision of overhead projector slides in respect of planning applications that are referred to Town and Parish Councils totalling £1500 per annum + resources.

**Risk** - There are no material risks

#### **LEGAL**

None

#### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Equality and Diversity**- None

**Consultation/Public Engagement** – The affected Town and Parish Councils, together with the relevant District Ward Members, were advised of the withdrawal of the provision of overhead projector slides in respect of planning applications that are referred to Town and Parish Councils on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2011 prior to the implementation date on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.

### **PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **BACKGROUND**

As part of the Council's investment in the Planning Services a system, Public Access, was introduced that enables electronic accessibility to planning applications and associated documents.

It has always been the practice to provide Town and Parish Councils with hard copies of all Planning Applications and associated documents as part of the planning consultation process. This is currently being continued.

Public Access enables our Town and Parish Councils to view and/or download all relevant information on a planning application at the press of a button.

This facility enables our Town and Parish Councils to work efficiently, as well as in partnership with the District Council, at no additional expense to the taxpayer.

Public Access enables councils to download files electronically or alternatively files can be made available by using projection equipment. This enables Councillors to electronically view planning applications and associated documents at their Planning meetings.

There is also funding available from the Lottery to enable Town and Parish Councils to purchase a projector.

This has proved extremely successful with our Town and Parish Councils and we have made either on-site training or at our Weeley offices available for all Town and Parish Clerks, together with any councillors that request this training. To-date 85% of Town and Parish Councils have received training by the Planning Service.

In light of the budgetary reductions, the Planning Services continually examines ways to reduce costs and it was identified that all but 4 Town/Parish councils were using this system for accessing planning information.

The cost to continue to provide the 4 councils was approximately £1,500 per annum, not including the additional officer resource.

With this in mind it was decided to cease the practice of sending out overhead projector slides, which was supported by the Planning Portfolio Holder.

Prior to ceasing this practice from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 an e-mail was sent out to the 4 councils, Brightlingsea, Harwich and Dovercourt, St.Osyth and Frinton and Walton, as well as the District Ward Councillors on the 19<sup>th</sup> January advising them of this change. Training was also made available.

Following this notification of the change to working practice a complaint was received from a councillor on the 19<sup>th</sup> January and the St.Osyth Parish Clerk on the 1<sup>st</sup> February, to which a detailed response was sent.

No further complaints or communication have since been received.

It should also be noted that at the Service Development and Delivery Committee on 20 June 2011 a motion was made that the Cabinet should be informed that the provision of overhead projector slides should be re-introduced if the Town or Parish Council were willing to pay for that service. However, on being put to the vote, that motion was lost.

<b>APPENDICES</b>
None