

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Development and Environmental Services

Planning Committee: 5 April 2006

Subject: e-Planning Efficient Government Programme

1.0 Purpose:

1.1 To advise members of the e-Planning Efficient Government Programme and the impact on West Dunbartonshire service delivery, and confirm agreement to entering into a Memorandum of Understanding to define and enable the project submission within the Efficient Government Programme for appraisal and funding.

2.0 Background:

2.1 The e-Planning Efficient Government Programme will deliver a step change in planning service delivery and drive forward efficiencies in the planning system. The programme is a partnership of key organisations involved with planning across Scotland – 32 councils, 2 National Parks, SEPA, SNH, Historic Scotland, Scottish Water and the Scottish Executive's Planning Division and Inquiry Reporters Unit. It is a change management initiative to move the planning system from paper based to electronic processes, coordinate shared services, maximise joint procurement benefits and ensure the adoption of best practice in e-service delivery.

2.2 The move to electronic processes rather than the paper based system currently operated will improve customer service. It is envisaged that the following functions will be rolled out as part of the process:

- Online submission of applications and appeals – a single shared service that provides a consistent and easy to use form to submit planning applications online, including online location plan production, online payment of planning fees and integration with back-office e-planning systems.
- Online access to casework information and electronic Records and Document Management (eRDM) – locally installed systems that allow citizens, agents and consultees to view and track planning applications online, and to view all the drawings and associated documents online.

- Expert system that answers common questions such as “do I need planning permission?” and sends an official email confirming the outcome, when appropriate.
- Online local plans –introduce best practice in online local plans, including the development of interactive local plans that allow address based querying of local plan policies and proposals maps.
- eConsultations – systems to improve consultation process between planning authorities and their internal and external consultees, includes the development of standards for electronic consultation requests and facilitating the transition from paper to electronic based consultation.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 The process is already under way in West Dunbartonshire with the new computer system for Development Management and Building Standards set to go live in April 2006. The Scottish Executive ePlanning proposals will provide the interactive element of this package ensuring West Dunbartonshire is integrated into the national planning information framework.
- 3.2 In addition the integration into the national planning information network is likely to be critical in future Best Value inspections. In England Planning Authorities are scored on the level of information and online accessibility to the planning system (Pendleton points). These scorings are used as part of an assessment that rates performance/efficiency/customer service.
- 3.3 With the rest of Scotland and all partners signed up to development of the framework it is essential that the Council be fully integrated into the development to ensure maximum benefit. The agreement to enter into the initial Memorandum of Understanding is not legally binding on the Council but is an indication of support for the national Efficient Government Funding bid.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1 The implementation of the system is likely to result in the creation of one additional post (systems development/administration) to be substantially funded by the Scottish Executive.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The bid is currently based on West Dunbartonshire funding 25% of the total cost of the programme with the Scottish Executive funding 75%. The financial model and full detailed costing are still to be resolved. The capital programme for 2006/07 includes a figure of £40,000 for e-Planning in knowledge and anticipation of this initiative.

6.0 Recommendation:

- 6.1 **It is recommended that members endorse the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and support both the national and local aims and objectives of the project.**

Dan Henderson
Director of Development and
Environmental Services

Background Papers:

1. Draft Minute of Understanding February 2006 – Scottish Executive – Planning Division.

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Wards Affected: All