

ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

7 MARCH 2002
14 MARCH 2002

**SUBJECT: GETTING INVOLVED IN PLANNING
CONSULTATION PAPER FROM THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE**

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

Abstract: This report provides the Council's proposed response to the Scottish Executive's Consultation Paper on Getting Involved in Planning which invites views and experience on how people can be more effectively involved in the planning system in Scotland.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

1. note the content of the Consultation Paper published by the Scottish Executive on Getting Involved in Planning;
2. note the proactive approach and wide ranging initiatives already adopted in Angus to consultation and involvement in land use planning, which extends beyond Development Planning and Development Control to also encompass Building Control, Conservation and Transport matters; and
3. agree that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Scottish Executive as Angus Council's response to the Consultation Paper, drawing attention to the discussion in part 4 of the report and answers to specific questions set out in Appendix 2.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Scottish Executive is carrying out a review of existing arrangements for enabling people to become involved in planning issues. A Consultation Paper entitled "Getting Involved in Planning" has been published by the Executive which describes the main issues on which comments are being sought before 31 March 2002.
- 2.2 A copy of the full Consultation Paper has been placed in the Members' Lounge. Appendix 1 to this report provides a 13 point summary of the main suggestions put forward by the Scottish Executive.
- 2.3 This report summarises the scope for improvement and best practice highlighted in the Consultation Paper. A suggested response is given in Appendix 2 to the 32 specific questions posed by the Scottish Executive. The response to each question takes full account of recent experience and current practice in consulting across a wide range of planning matters in Angus.

3 CONSULTATION PAPER

3.1 Public involvement is an important and longstanding feature of the Scottish planning system. The Consultation Paper looks at the effectiveness of existing arrangements and considers the scope for improvements, through promoting best practice, by highlighting the benefits of new technology and by considering changes to legislation.

3.2 The paper is comprised of six main sections covering:-

- Invitation to Inform and Comment
- Setting the Scene
- Drivers for Change
- Planning Today
- Key Elements of Public Involvement in Planning
- Opportunities Offered by New Technology

3.3 The measures suggested in the Consultation Paper are intended to improve the framework for involvement in the planning system by all parties. This recognises the many aspects of the planning system with opportunities for public involvement including development planning, planning appeals and the way in which neighbours and the wider community are made aware of planning proposals.

3.4 Among the main drivers for change identified in the Consultation Paper are:-

The Scottish Parliament	With heightened expectations that decision making should be inclusive, including the process of reviewing National Planning Policy Guidelines.
Social Justice	Where policy and decision making need to pay attention to the needs of all communities and interests.
Community Planning	Which will become the principal over-arching framework for community engagement at the Local Authority level.
Digital Scotland and 21 st Century Government	Which uses technology to give the scope to do new things altogether.
Best Value	An important part of Best Value is getting a customer view of the service.
Complaints and the Ombudsman	It is important for public confidence in the system that the arrangements for public involvement work properly.
International and European Obligations	This includes the planning implications of the European Convention on Human Rights.
Third Party Rights of Appeal	The Consultation Paper does not offer change in respect of third party appeal rights, but the measures it describes are intended to strengthen opportunities for the public to take part in the planning system and to help make existing arrangements more effective.

3.5 Key elements of public involvement in planning which are identified in the Consultation Paper, and which provide the basis for the various questions posed by the Scottish Executive, are as follows:-

- Active Planning : Keeping the Service Under Review (Q1)
- Preparing and Modifying Development Plans (Q2)
- Local Plan Inquiry and Adoption (Q3, 4, 5)
- Applying for Planning Permission (Q6)
- Notifying Neighbours (Q7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)
- Advertising Planning Proposals (Q14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20)
- Consultations (Q21)
- Objections and Representations (Q22)
- Reports on Applications : Setting Out the Facts (Q23)
- Making Planning Decisions Available (Q24)
- Information on Planning Agreements (Q25)
- Appeals (Q26, 27)
- Enforcement (Q28)
- A Role for Mediation (Q29)
- The Planning System Nationally (Q30)
- Opportunities Offered by New Technology (Q31, 32)

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The Consultation Paper seeks to build on the experience and wide ranging activities already undertaken by Planning Authorities throughout Scotland in supporting improved customer care in planning. In Angus successful efforts in developing and implementing a proactive approach to public consultation and involvement have previously been recognised including Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning commendations received for:-

- outstanding performance and quality in Development Control for emphasis on Customer Care (1999);
- outstanding performance and quality in Development Planning for streamlining the Angus Local Plan Public Local Inquiry (2000).

4.2 These awards are a reflection of the wider proactive approach adopted to delivering continuous improvement in consultation and involvement measures in the Planning Service in Angus which has also included:-

- publication and distribution of a Planning Handbook designed to provide an explanation of the planning system and to answer some of the questions which are most commonly asked by people who visit or telephone the Department;
- Charters produced for Local Plans, Development Control, Conservation and Planning Enforcement indicating the relevant standards of service to be provided;
- Best Value Service Reviews for Development Control and Development Plans;
- Linkages to other related consultation activities undertaken by the Department including Public Transport, Building Control and Conservation matters as set out in the Department's Service Plan.

- 4.3 Experience in consultation and public involvement in statutory planning matters in Angus has also contributed towards wider corporate initiatives of the Council. This includes the approach adopted to encouraging active citizenship and facilitating empowerment for all sections of the community to participate in decision making as embodied in:-
- Angus Council's Corporate Plan
 - The Angus Community Plan
 - Local Agenda 21 Strategy for Angus
 - Angus Council's Consultation/Involvement Strategy
 - Angus Citizen's Panel
 - Angus Area Forums, ACCESS Offices and ACCESS Line, and the Angus Council's Decentralisation Strategy.
- 4.4 This general background, together with the experience of Development Planning and Development Control in Angus as summarised below, provides the broad context for the responses to individual questions set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

Development Planning

- 4.5 Recent experience in preparing Development Plans in Angus has included undertaking wide ranging consultation at various stages on both the Angus Local Plan and the Dundee and Angus Structure Plan. Details of the approaches adopted and the responses received are fully set out in the respective Statements of Publicity and Consultation prepared for these Plans. Table 1 summarises some of the publicity and consultation measures and initiatives which have been used in preparing the Structure Plan and Local Plan.

Table 1 : Recent Development Plan Consultation in Angus

Consultation/Publicity Measures	Angus Local Plan	Dundee and Angus Structure Plan
Local Plan Charter	•	
Project Brief/Information Leaflet	•	•
Posters	•	
Exhibitions (including mobile)	•	
Public Meetings/Area Forums	•	•
Specialist Forums/Groups	•	•
Summary Newspaper	•	•
Web Site		•
Newspaper/Media Articles	•	•
Media Interviews	•	•
Public Notices/Advertisements	•	•
CLEAR Project ¹		•
User Surveys	•	•

Note 1 – Community Local Environment Awareness Raising Workshop for community groups organised by Planning aid for Scotland

- 4.6 In addition to consultation on statutory Development Plans, the Council encourages public involvement in the preparation of Development Briefs which are used to further establish the detailed planning requirements for major sites identified in the Angus Local Plan. This assists in the implementation of the Local Plan by guiding developers towards a successful planning submission while securing community involvement in the endorsement of planning principles and site specific requirements.

Development Control

- 4.7 A number of measures have been implemented since 1996 to make an already customer orientated service even more user-friendly. The most progressive step was probably the forwarding of Committee application reports to all interested parties in advance of the Committee meeting. This is accompanied by an invitation to address the Committee on the evening of the meeting.
- 4.8 This measure stemmed from the results of a customer opinion survey, which two years later, is currently being repeated in order to identify other possible improvements to service. An annual meeting with agents active in Angus has also been introduced to seek the views of those involved with the development control process on a regular basis.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Law & Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human rights issues arising from this report. The planning implications of the European Convention on Human Rights have received much attention nationally, although the Convention and the planning system have worked together since 1951. The existing principles of public participation in planning are in keeping with Convention principles. The Scottish Executive and Local Authorities will keep case law in view. Cases heard in Strasbourg and in U.K. Courts since 1998 have led to judgements supporting existing arrangements.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Consultation Paper raises issues on public involvement, consultation and participation across a wide range of land use planning matters and activities. Experience in Angus confirms that it is important to continue to pursue an open and innovative approach tailored to local circumstances and opportunities, including taking full account of land use planning requirements alongside corporate initiatives of the Council.

- 8.2 Whilst in respect of the development control procedures there are some good suggestions in the Consultation Paper and others worthy of further consideration, at a time when speed of processing is paramount with the Government, many of the suggestions will certainly have the opposite effect. In many cases, additional staff and therefore additional costs, would be essential. There is also a risk of overly complicating the system and making it too costly for the user. The Executive must balance these issues at the end of the day, or a poorer, not a better product, will be the outcome.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/CGR/KW
26 February 2002

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning and Transport

APPENDIX 1**SUMMARY OF MAIN SUGGESTIONS**

- Community based consultation forums for planning policy and implementation.
- Neighbour notification for new land use proposals in development plans.
- New arrangements for Local Plan Inquiries and adopting Local Plans, giving greater weight to Reporters' recommendations.
- Standard national Planning Application Forms.
- Neighbour notification on applications to be carried out by Councils, putting proposals on public view from the start.
- Providing more information to neighbours as part of the notification process.
- Extending the period for making representations.
- Introducing notifications for enforcement and some advertisement cases.
- Reduced period for lodging Planning Appeals : from six to two months.
- Regular national consultation to identify problems and good practice in Scotland.
- New working group to co-ordinate central and local use of information technology for information and service, and identify good practice.
- National Planning Helpline links to local sources of information and advice.
- Investigation of possible long-term funding for Planning Aid's work in community training and support.

APPENDIX 2

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

- Q1 We think Councils should consider setting up local Planning Policy Forums to consider planning issues and build up local interest and expertise. Do you agree?**

Response – This suggestion is based on the Executive's view that there is a need to strengthen active public involvement in planning as a more continuous process which should help community groups develop the capacity to take part in the planning process more productively. While this has considerable merit the ways in which it is achieved should take into account the local arrangements for public involvement.

In Angus we already have the benefit of Area Forums which provide a vehicle encouraging dialogue and building up interest across a range of matters of interest to local communities, including planning issues. In practice planning issues have continued to figure among the matters regularly raised at Area Forums across Angus. This has complemented other channels of feedback, including specialist forums and meetings arranged during various stages of Development Plan preparation and regular weekly development control surgeries.

In view of the existing planning and corporate arrangements operating in Angus, there does not appear a strong case for setting up a further set of forums specifically to deal with all aspects of the planning service in an area. Indeed this could potentially confuse and detract from present arrangements where planning matters are discussed alongside other matters of local community interest including environmental and transport issues.

- Q2 Where people are going to be directly affected by policy changes in a Development Plan, we think direct notification of owners, tenants and neighbours should be considered. Do you agree?**

Response – Where feasible this should be considered albeit that there are likely to be practical difficulties in identifying who may be directly affected by a particular policy or proposal. At one extreme all residents and businesses in Angus might potentially be affected by a general policy. In some cases a significant number of people could also have an interest in, for example, a proposal to allocate a major site for development. In these circumstances it is therefore important to continue to ensure that Development Plan preparation arrangements are widely publicised, including targeting known interest groups where possible.

This question, as posed by the Scottish Executive, is not entirely clear. It appears to relate to policy changes, whereas experience in Angus suggests it is site specific proposals for development identified in Local Plans which raise the areas of greatest interest from owners, tenants, neighbours and the general public. The preamble discussion accompanying the question also appears to relate to wider mechanisms for ensuring opportunities for people and groups to comment and have their views taken into account.

Q3 We think Reporters for Local Plan Inquiries should be appointed independently by the Scottish Executive Inquiry Reporters' Unit, who would conduct the Inquiry and recover costs from the Council. Do you agree?

Response – Yes. This would further reduce any potential criticism that the Council in any way influenced a full and fair hearing of objections lodged on Local Plans. Having regard to Q4, there would appear to be a case for the costs being met by the Scottish Executive.

Q4 We think the scope to depart from the Reporter's recommendations should be limited. Do you agree?

Response – Yes. In adopting the Angus Local Plan the Council accepted the policy recommendations of each of the Reporters as an independent arbiter. This included some recommendations by the Reporters which did not support the Council's case as presented to the Public Local Inquiry. It is therefore agreed that the discretion to depart from a Reporter's recommendation should be limited and require to be fully justified.

Q5 How can we make Local Plan adoption faster and more user-friendly?

Response – This is a wide ranging and open-ended question where, even with the various suggestions in the Consultation Paper, the Scottish Executive recognise that Local Plan adoption will still be time-consuming and difficult for people to understand. The Executive therefore see no easy answers, despite several Consultation Papers over the past few years which have examined various aspects of the Local Plan preparation and adoption process.

In Angus recent experience has included:-

- preparation and adoption of the Angus Local Plan;
- participation in the pilot audit of Development Planning undertaken by the Scottish Executive;
- a national commendation for streamlining the Angus Local Plan Public Local Inquiry.

From this experience it is clear that while efficient and effective management can help to speed up plan production, there are limits as to what can be achieved while affording full opportunity for the submission, discussion, consideration and response to objections. It is unrealistic to expect that innovations which may be useful and valuable in their own right, such as the exchange of information and debate on the internet or a greater role for mediation, will significantly address this question. Indeed it is inevitable that Local Plans will continue to raise important matters generating local controversy.

Whilst recognising the difficulties involved and the balance between public involvement and speed, there may be scope for removing the need for the consultative draft plan stage where there is a recently adopted Local Plan (say within three/four years). Publication of a finalised plan with a longer period for representations (say twelve weeks) coupled with decisions on the objections given verbally by the Reporter during the Public Inquiry and followed by a written report

could reduce the overall timescale. On the basis of the current arrangements key elements of good practice utilised during the Public Local Inquiry and adoption stage in Angus included:-

- use of appropriate IT software (UNIFORM Local Plan Module) to assist documenting objections and responses – this ensured a flexible system allowing material to be assembled and interrogated in a variety of ways, facilitating the electronic transfer of material, and assisting liaison among objectors, Planning Officers, PLI Programme Officer and PLI Reporters;
- publication of three rounds of pre-inquiry modifications in parallel with arrangements leading up to the PLI – this allowed full account to be taken of progress on negotiations with objectors, significantly reducing the final number of outstanding objections to be debated in full at the PLI;
- preparation of Topic Papers to accompany Statements of Evidence for the PLI – this enabled statements to be kept brief focusing on Key Issues, avoiding duplication and repetition, and ensuring a succinct presentation of the Council's position to objectors and Reporters;
- use of two Reporters and Programme Officer, with Inquiry Hearings allocated to several locations, across Angus – this enabled objectors to be heard locally and shortened the writing time for preparation of the PLI report;
- use of “panel” of planning witnesses – this ensured that relevant staff gained experience of giving evidence, that the Council's case was fully presented, and that objectors and Reporters had ready access to appropriate personnel;
- use of common document formats with Reporters – this simplified and shortened the production time of the PLI report, the subsequent Statement of Response by the Council, and the published Post Inquiry Modifications;
- continued emphasis on customer care – this maintained efforts to inform and assist participants throughout the process, including circulation of explanatory material (e.g. Angus Local Plan Charter documenting stages in plan process) and early public release of PLI report in advance of Council response to ensure all parties were kept fully informed.

Q6 We see merit in standard application forms for all Councils. They could be user-friendly, with translation and all necessary Certificates. Do you agree?

Response – Yes. While there is no objection in principle, the form should be as simple as possible, including the certificate and should allow for incorporation of local detail – e.g. Council name etc.

Q7 Do you agree that:-

- (a) **Authorities should take responsibility for neighbour notification?**
- (b) **application fees should be increased to cover their extra costs?**
- (c) **research is carried out to help decide the fee increase required?**

Response – (a) The experience in Angus is that “warts and all” the current procedures work. There has been only one neighbour notification issue of any significance in Angus since 1996. While the present system does present some difficulties it is not certain that transferring the responsibility to the local authority will eliminate all these. Experience in England (particularly involving the Ombudsman) supports the view that problems can and do still frequently arise. Applicants often have more knowledge of their local area and the residents present there than a Planning Authority. If change is to be introduced then it may be best to await the development of land and property gazetteers as part of the application of E-Government as this should assist the process.

Response – (b) If the system is changed then a considerably increased burden of cost will accrue to the Planning Authority. In Angus a new administrative appointment would be essential and, therefore, this new cost burden would require to be met by increased fees.

Response – (c) If the system is changed there would be no objection to research being undertaken.

Q8 Do you agree that Planning Authorities should have the flexibility to decide how best to serve neighbour notification?

Response – If the change is to be introduced then there should be a degree of consistency in how the notification should be served.

Q9 Do you agree with keeping the duty to notify owners and occupiers and removing it for non-domestic lessees?

Response – Yes.

Q10 Do you agree that notification should include the information and guidance described above?

Response – The basic intention and spirit of notification is to bring the existence of a nearby planning application to the attention of neighbours so that they may take the opportunity to investigate further should they wish. It is not the intention to provide them with all the details. In fact there is a danger in suggesting to neighbours that the plans provided are totally detailed and accurate at the notification stage when they are possibly not. There will be inevitable delays while plans meeting the new requirement are provided and how many sets of plans will have to be provided by the applicants who, presumably, will not now know the number of neighbours to be notified. If the Council is to provide all these additional plans, who is to pay?

The other information suggested – when plans can be expected, how responses can be made, what constitutes a material consideration, etc – is already provided at Angus.

Q11 Do you agree with extending the time for responding to neighbour notification from 14 to 21 days?

Response – Yes but the Executive should also agree to extending their expectancies/performance indicators, particularly in respect of householder applications. Not aware of any significant problems with the present arrangements and informally Angus accepts objections right up until determination/Committee report.

- Q12 (a) Do you agree there should be neighbour notification where an Enforcement Notice is served, and for certain types of advertisement proposals?**
- (b) What kind of advertisements should be included?**
- (c) Should the Authority serve the notice in both cases?**

Response – No opposition in respect to enforcement notices but neighbour problems with advertisements are virtually unknown and, therefore, notification is not warranted.

- Q13 What are your views on what should trigger re-notification?**

Response – This is a poisoned chalice and whatever criteria are established (which by their nature would be complex) there would be inevitable grey areas open to challenge. Two points might be if a site is enlarged – re-notify, conversely if the change had generally fallen under permitted development rights (assuming the development had been completed) then no re-notification.

- Q14 Do you agree that we should end the requirement to advertise planning proposals in the Edinburgh Gazette?**

Response – Yes.

- Q15 Do you think Local Authorities should be able to decide themselves how best to publicise planning proposals locally?**

Response – In principle yes but there should be standard guidelines to ensure a good degree of consistency.

- Q16 (a) Do you agree that Council's should regularly publish a notice explaining where copies of the weekly list can be viewed, and post the list on the internet?**
- (b) Should such lists be distributed free of charge to amenity societies currently dependent upon the Edinburgh Gazette for information?**

Response – (a) In Angus at present, the press are pleased to print a list of new applications for free, if this was to become a legal requirement, classified adverts would be required and then who would pay? So called savings on current advertising would be minimal by comparison and only then if duplication was officially dispensed with. If cost to be met by applicant, could reach the stage where advertising, costs of extra plans, neighbour notification charges, etc considerably adds to the fee leading to breaches as smaller developments are undertaken without consent merely to avoid these mounting costs. The merits of advertising householder applications is questionable given neighbour notification.

Posting the list on the internet is acceptable in due course.

Response – (b) Very few amenity societies refer to the Gazette, and as an alternative the appropriate societies could be provided with a weekly list.

Q17 Do you agree that the time for making representations in all cases should be extended to 21 days? EIA cases would continue to have 28 days?

Response – If this is directed at bad neighbour developments only, then no objection to extending period to 21 days.

Q18 Do you agree that applicants for proposals contrary to an adopted Development Plan should bear the costs of advertising?

Response – Yes. Description, however, should be “potentially contrary”.

Q19 Do you agree that costs for advertising listed building and conservation area developments should remain with Planning Authorities?

Response – No. The costs should be met by the applicant.

Q20 Would wider use of site notices add to the effectiveness of informing the public?

Response – Possibly but the difficulties stated make it an imperfect mechanism. Advertising and neighbour notification should be sufficient and would probably be required in any event.

Q21 Should official consultation responses be open to all as soon as they are made?

Response – Yes. These are made available at Angus.

**Q22 (a) Should there be standard ways to make comments on applications electronically?
(b) Should there be a national form for comments?
(c) Should the comments be publicly available?**

Response – (a) Yes. There is a need for a core of standard information, name, address etc.

Response – (b) No.

Response – (c) There is a need for clear guidance on this to achieve a consistent approach. Perhaps the comments should be made available without identifying the name and address of the respondent.

Q23 Do you agree that the full record of relevant factors in deciding applications, and the reasons for decisions, should always be publicly available?

Response – For small applications which are approved under delegated authority there would not appear to be a need for this approach.

Q24 We think the full text of planning decisions should always be available from the Council so that people can take copies without undue difficulty or expense. Do you agree?

Response – Yes but a charge should still be levied for copies.

**Q25 (a) We think more information should be made available on planning agreements and entered in the planning register. Do you agree?
(b) What level of information should be recorded?**

Response – Angus already compiles a Section 75 register, therefore, it would not be a problem to incorporate full copies of agreements in the statutory register.

Q26 We think that six months for making appeals is too long and suggest that it be reduced to two months. Do you agree?

Response – Agree.

Q27 How can we make appeal inquiries more accessible and less intimidating?

Response – Agreed that this is a problem but it is too big an issue to form part of this consultation document, more appropriately the subject of consultancy research.

**Q28 (a) Do you agree that Enforcement Notices should be neighbour-notified?
(b) Should there be other changes in public information on enforcement, particularly to publicise any action being taken by the Planning Authority?**

Response – Yes (as previous Q12) to neighbour notification. No to other information which, if publicised could jeopardise actions, negotiations, etc.

**Q29 (a) Do you have views on the use of mediation in planning?
(b) When could it be recommended?
(c) How could it be funded and arranged?**

Response – Various forms of mediation at different levels of formality already take place, for example in organising interest group forums to discuss emerging Development Plan policies and proposals. The scope for extending this will depend, at least in part, on the staffing and other resources available within the Planning Authority.

In respect to development control issues mediation would be excessively time-consuming. The process at present can involve some informal mediation but this experience only emphasises the point that is demanding of time and with little prospect of resolution. So often the sides are entrenched and no hours of mediation will help. Again performance indicators would be adversely affected due to time lost through mediation activities. However, there are potential benefits and perhaps a pilot(s) would be a way forward to test the technique.

Q30 Do you see value in a national consultative group to review current problems and help promote best practice and policy development?

Response – Potentially yes. The suggestion that the Scottish Executive should gather such a group for an annual exchange of views, to alert interested parties to current planning problems and examples of good practice has some merit. It is important that this should add to rather than replace existing mechanisms and that such a group be limited to a consultation role. The term national users consultative group appears in the text accompanying this suggestion. This should include representation from Local Authorities (COSLA), the Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland, and the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning in helping to influence the development of national policy.

Q31 We think that a working group should keep abreast of electronic opportunities for better access to planning information and services, co-ordinating progress across Scotland and drawing attention to good practice. Do you agree?

Response – Yes. This would usefully sit alongside and assist the development and delivery of planning aspects of individual Councils E-Government Strategies and Action Plans. In Angus the department is actively looking at the improvements to service delivery which can be achieved through the increased use of technology including building upon the UNIFORM computer system.

Q32 We propose to explore ways to co-ordinate national and local planning help line services. Do you agree?

Response – This also raises wider corporate Council issues. In Angus the further development of the ACCESS line provides the direct line for members of the public wishing information about Council services, including planning matters. It is therefore important that both national and local requirements are addressed.