

APPENDIX A

**Minutes of an iPlan Users Group held on 29 May 2014
at 10:00am in Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Epping**

Chair: Peter Millward (PM) – Epping Forest District Council

Attendees:

Brian Surtees (BS) – Ongar Town Council
 Joan Bowerman (JB) – Matching Parish Council
 Ernie Fenwick (EF) – Willingale and Matching Parish Council
 Vivienne Messenger (VM) – Loughton Town Council
 Adriana Jones (AJ) – North Weald Parish Council
 Patricia Price (PP) – Lambourne Parish Council
 Nigel Richardson (NR) – Epping Forest District Council
 Stephen Bacon (SB) – Epping Forest District Council
 Stephen Mitchell (SM) – Epping Forest District Council
 Shipra Bajpai (SBj) – Epping Forest District Council
 David Newton (DN) – Epping Forest District Council
 Mavis Bird (MB) – Epping Forest District Council
 Andrew Rich (AR) – Epping Forest District Council
 Michelle Harding (MH) – Epping Forest District Council
 Chris Redman (CR) Minutes – Epping Forest District Council

PM welcomed everyone to the meeting.

		Action
1.0	APOLOGIES –	
	Chris Pond (CP) – Loughton Town Council	
2.0	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	
	All approved the minutes of the previous meeting.	
3.0	MATTERS ARISING	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Licensing online archive (p1 Item 3.1)</u> – SB is working with Licensing to encourage increased use of Information@Work in an effort to place entire licensing applications online. Backscanning of up to 2 years applications also to be encouraged. • <u>Neighbour comments to Town / Parish Councils (p2 Item 3.2)</u> – CR to place message on website encouraging forwarding of neighbour comments to appropriate local Town / Parish Council. • <u>Read-only access to Information@Work (p2 Item 3.2)</u> – SBj is in the process of setting up VPN access to Information@Work, and will meet with VM to trial after the meeting. NR noted that since 1 May 2014, all internal, external and Parish Council comments are now published to the website. Third-party neighbour letters are still not published as there are not the 	CR

	<p>appropriate resources for redaction of personal information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Site-wide WiFi at Civic Offices (p2 Item 3.3)</u> – SB reported that site-wide Wi-Fi is now in place, and is being tested by selected staff and Members as a first step to improve WiFi access at Committees – public access hoped to be in place by July 2014. <p>(PP joined the meeting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Validation Checklist (p3 Item 3.8)</u> – NR noted that the validation checklist has now been published to the website. • <u>Site notices published to website (p3 Item 3.10)</u> – It was agreed that it was not necessary to publish photographs of site notices to the website, but that it would still be useful if the Case Officer took a photograph to show that one had been displayed. • <u>Visits by Town / Parish Councils to Development Management (p4 Item 4.0)</u> – PM would still like to encourage Parish Councillors and Clerks to visit to familiarise themselves with our processes – please liaise with PM on suitable times in the first instance. • <u>Online access to Webcast archive (p4 Item 5.0)</u> – SB noted that access to archived webcasts has not yet been initiated – if any are needed urgently, then please email Simon Hill SHill@eppingforestdc.gov.uk who can arrange for copies to be placed on CD if they are required. • <u>Training at EFDC for preparation for electronic meetings (p5 Item 6.0)</u> – SB reported that once VPN access to Information@Work has been completed, then training sessions in the use of the system for preparation for electronic meetings can begin. • <u>Homepage for Town / Parish Councils (p5 Item 6.0)</u> – SB mentioned that a homepage for Parish Councils on the EFDC website can still be created it wished – liaison with Town / Parish Councils on content needed would be next step. 	
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4.0	TOWN / PARISH COUNCIL FEEDBACK - USE OF IPLAN	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AJ noted that issues were improving and had nothing negative to report, and thanked EFDC for the publications of letters from Highways that were proving useful. Access in rural areas was still a problem – SB thought that fibre WiFi would help this. • VM mentioned that plans from Colin Southgate were still hard to read when scanned – NR noted that he had recently changed the way they are produced, and are very slightly improved in quality. • VM also has problems with highly coloured plans published to the website – often these prove far too large in size to download. MB reported that standard sizes cannot be stipulated through the Planning Portal, but AR should be notified if files are too big to download. • Difficulty using scale-bars when presenting were also discussed – VM thought it would be helpful if agents could add dimensions to the plans. NR did suggest this in the validation checklist, but the result could look confusing and it would be hard to know where to draw the line on how many measurements should be included. VM and NR to discuss, but SB noted that VPN access will provide scaling tools for all PDF's from the 	<p>AR</p> <p>VM / NR</p>

	<p>Planning Portal and there is also a scaling tool on the TIFF files we use. Training on this could be provided, and dimensions added before the meeting if required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SB added that ICT had met with Northgate, and they were looking into the possibility of making file names friendly, and for a 'download all' facility. • PP wondered if there could be training for new Town and Parish Clerks in preparing the files for electronic presentations? AJ noted that spending some time with the EFDC Application Team had proved very helpful. SB suggested that Powerpoint training could be offered if a group of 8 – 10 people could be found; in the meantime, if a better way of compiling applications for presentation by EFDC Officers was found, then it would be passed on to the Clerks. • BS mentioned that Ongar view plans online for meetings – this is fine while paper plans are provided as a back-up, but when they are gone they will probably have to copy the documents; this was not a streamlined approach. SB hoped that there will be the ability to pull off documents and place them into a desktop folder for users with VPN access very shortly that would solve the problem. • EF noted that neither Matching or Willingale have broadband, and therefore do not use i-Plan. Although in favour of technology, EF was concerned at the extra work for Clerks and the costs involved, and felt that Clerks should not have to look for plans etc – Clerks in Uttlesford receive an email for each specific site, rather than searching through on the Weekly List. SBj and MB both thought that this could be achieved quite easily through an email from the M3 Northgate system and will investigate. • JB wondered whether the whole process of presenting plans electronically was viable when it seemed so costly to initiate? PM and NR mentioned that the benefits had already been seen by some of the other Parish Councils who were working this way, and that the printing of extra plans by EFDC was very costly and resource-heavy. <p>(DN joined the meeting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM discussed the improvements in the quality of the plans published to the website, and the constant measures to improve them. This could include rejecting them at validation stage. SB suggested that if Officers were made to work electronically only, then this would force them to look at quality – NR noted that EFDC are trialling remote working at present, with a view to making Officers less reliant on paper plans. • BS noted that there was an incident where a Permitted Development Application was published to the website – comments were still requested (although they should not have been), and were submitted by a neighbour. SB thought that this could be prevented on M3 at application registration – MB to implement. <p>(AJ left the meeting)</p>	<p>SBj / MB</p> <p>MB</p>
5.0	GRANTS FOR PURCHASE OF PROJECTORS / SCREENS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM reported that funding had been obtained for a small amount of projectors – a grant had been provided, but this would not include maintenance or set up. Interest had been received from 5 Councils so far – PM is proposing to work with JB to represent the interests of some of the 	<p>PM / JB</p>

	<p>other Town and Parish Councils who are less well resourced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PP queried whether this would also apply to help to purchase a screen? PM had looked into this matter (£80 funding could be obtained) but BS noted that the use of a TV would suffice for most small meetings. 	
6.0	• BROADBAND, LAPTOPS AND COMPUTERS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DN commented that he had attended a meeting regarding BT Superfast Broadband, as there were still issues in getting Broadband to some areas. Projectors would be of no use if the data for Broadband connectivity and equipment needed was still lacking and ICT may be in a position to help. ICT can work with Buzzcom to beam Broadband to some of the Town and Parish Councils who are having problems – volunteers are needed, and equipment can be semi-loaned to promote remote working, and ICT can visit and discuss equipment held / needed, and to possibly attend a Town and Parish Council meeting. JB thought that the proposed cost (£20 per month) could prove prohibitive for a smaller Parish Council – PM noted that meetings do not have to be online; images can easily be downloaded beforehand. EF volunteered for Matching – PM to liaise with JB to find 3 Town and Parish Councils to participate – NR suggested that Chigwell have connectivity problems and should also be included. SB also suggested that WiFi could be used at the Civic Offices to download images etc if required. MB demonstrated a portable dongle costing approximately £30 on her laptop to gain website access – she demonstrated that a device does not have to be expensive or difficult to use. PM had previously forwarded an email to the group detailing options for Town and Parish Councils to apply for equipment – unfortunately, EFDC are not able to assist with IT equipment and PC's, although they can assist with projectors as discussed. PM stressed that before projectors can be allocated, EFDC would need confirmation that the Town / Parish Council had a PC in use. <p>(BS and SBj left the meeting)</p>	PM / JB
7.0	FURTHER VISITS BY TOWN / PARISH COUNCILS TO EFDC	
	PM encouraged further visits to EFDC from Town and Parish Councils as discussed earlier in the meeting – contact PM for more details.	
8.0	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BS noted that people are relying on Streetview or Google Maps, both of which are out of date. SB reported that EFDC are about to move to a new Corporate GIS system. VM encouraged anyone who would wish to attend Loughton Town Council paperless meetings to contact her. NR and VM to discussed whether hard copies of plans still need to be sent to Loughton? – VM to report back. PM also to contact BS regarding Ongar. MB mentioned that if any of the group had queries and were not sure who to address, then she was happy to liaise and put them through to the right place. 	VM / PM

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MB is also looking into historical problems with planning history – if any of the group noticed any then please let MB know. • SB noted that as part of the replacement for GIS, ICT will be looking to work with Parish Councils on mapping, and can supply the necessary tools if required – SB suggest the i-Plan User Group would be an ideal group to start with, and can supply more details if required. 	
9.0	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
	TBC	