BRIEFING NOTE

RE: Paperless planning applications

1. Purpose:
The purpose of the Note is to seek the approval of Council and the Planning committee for the treatment of paperless planning applications, effective 1 April 2017.

2. Current arrangements:
The current arrangements are that paper copies of all applications and their plans are delivered by Mid Sussex District Council to the Parish Office. Prior to the Planning Committee meeting members of the public can visit the Parish Office and view the applications and plans on request. A selection of the submitted plans and drawings are fixed to the wall of the Committee room to allow Members and the public to view. Not all plans are made available for viewing, but can be seen by Members on request. The Parish Council's Planning Committee considers the applications, other than those delegated to the Committee Chairman and VC, at its meeting.

Applications from South Downs National Park Authority are notified only by reference to their website, when a monthly search is carried out by the Parish Office for relevant items. The details are then downloaded and printed. The limitations of the office printer means that plans can only be printed to A3 size.

The Council receives about 20 applications a month from MSDC and one or two from SDNPA.

3. The Council has been advised by Mid Sussex District Council that all planning applications will be handled digitally from 1 April 2018 and no paper copies will be available. *(Ref: email MSDC 21 Sept 2017).* This affects all town and parish councils.

4. Future arrangements:
Information from MSDC will be by their Weekly List sent to the Parish Office, which notifies of new applications. The application details will be only available on the MSDC website planning portal, as it is currently used. The Parish Council then has the following options:

(1) Download and print all details: The printing limitations mean that plans would be restricted to A3 size. It is suggested that this option is unworkable as the print size is limited and the staff time taken to download and print would be around 20 minutes per application = 7 hours.

(2) Download and select only key items: Only those applications for consideration by the Committee would be selected, and then only the key information. This information would then be displayed at the Committee meeting.

It is suggested that Option (2) is followed.

5. Proposals:
(1) The Parish Office reviews the Weekly Lists from MSDC and divides the applications into:

a) Those to be delegated to Chairman/VC for consideration (as currently defined by Minute P17/054.(2 November 2017) and (1) Minute P17/048. (5 October 2017):Procedure for the delegation of smaller planning applications to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.)
b) Those for consideration by Committee.

(2) The Committee Chairman and VC are advised of those applications to be delegated, and then review online and advise the Office of their recommendation, in advance of the Committee meeting.

(3) Once the committee meeting agenda is issued Members are able to access the MSDC Planning Portal and view all details of the applications, in advance of the meeting if they wish.

(4) Applications for the Committee are reviewed online by the Parish Office and for each the following is downloaded:

a) Application form
b) Location and block plan
c) Elevations (not less than two, depending on the complexity of the design)
d) Layout plan
e) Design and access statement

The information is retained on a memory-stick and accessed through a laptop.

(5) At the committee meeting for each application in turn the following is displayed on screen (via laptop and projector):

a) Location and block plan
b) Layout plan
c) Elevations

Members with their own laptop/tablet may access the MSDC portal via local WiFi to obtain further detail if they wish.

(6) Members of the public requiring sight of applications prior to the meeting will be directed to the Library, who provide public access to the internet and thereby to the MSDC portal. The Parish Office would advise the Library of these arrangements, so that they are suitably prepared.

(7) Committee Members will be encouraged to check the Weekly Lists from MSDC (on the planning portal) for an early indication of new applications.

6. Other matters:

a) The Parish Council owns a projector and screen but currently uses the Clerk's personal laptop, which is not sufficiently large for this purpose. A new large-screen format laptop would be purchased. (Proposal: model DELL Inspiron 17 5770 17.3"). The best price deals are available by online or store purchases with credit-card payment. The Council does not have a card for purchases and it is therefore proposed that the Clerk makes the purchase and is reimbursed.
b) MSDC have advised that they are not willing to fund any equipment requirements.
c) There is no WiFi currently available in the Committee Meeting Room, and arrangements will be made with the Village Centre to ensure its installation. It is possible that the Council might be expected to pay for a dedicated WiFi emitter extended from the existing Parish Office hub, and the estimated cost is £200.
d) It is suggested that the Planning Committee 'twin-tracks' the arrangements (current and proposed) for the meeting 4 January 2018, with a view to switching to the digital system on 1 February 2018.

RECOMMENDATION to Council:

(1) The Planning Committee is asked to adopt the digital application system from 4 January 2018.
(2) A laptop (model DELL Inspiron 17 5770 17.3" Laptop or similar) is purchased for £625 + VAT.
(3) Village Centre Association is requested to install WiFi into the Committee Room. If necessary the Council shall pay for a dedicated connection at an estimated cost of £200 + VAT.

Stephen Hoyles
CLERK TO THE COUNCIL
14 November 2017