

From Councillor Douglas de Lacey to the Planning Portfolio Holder:

“Will the Portfolio Holder please tell us how it is possible that an upgrade of a perfectly-functioning planning website, on which many Parish Councillors rely to fulfil their duties, can take over three weeks rather than the three milliseconds which switching systems in the 21st century would normally be expected to take?”

I agree that the changing or switching of websites takes but a moment. However the work being undertaken is much more than this and involves the closure of the existing planning database, the extraction of data and all related records back to 1948. This was then sent to our new supplier Swift LG where the data has been converted for import back into the new planning system.

This work was scheduled to take two weeks and I can confirm it has been completed successfully. Testing of the data has taken place and the system went live on Monday.

The planning service is acutely aware of the disruption to customers and has minimised this by clear scheduling of work and taking mitigating actions including interim working arrangements that allow members to be kept up to date with records of submitted applications, whilst at the same time publishing as much information as possible to the public. Please note that:

- All records that existed on the website prior to 2nd July have been fully maintained on the site, including notifications of decisions and details of any amendments. Only new applications were not appearing.
- For new applications, staff were validating these applications manually and creating a list that was regularly circulated to members via email. As soon as the new system was available, staff commenced uploading these applications so that they are available on the new search page as soon as it is turned on, which will be by the 26th July at the latest. Newly received applications are also being entered simultaneously to ensure no continuing delay to application detail availability.
- Parish Councils were informed of the planned procedure at the forum held on 14th June, prior to the transition commencing and although there were some concerns, in general Parish Councils expressed understanding, because the manual system was to be introduced.
- Periods for consultations are unaffected by the transition between systems.
- Work to connect the new database with the new Swift webpages is underway and we expect to be live in the next day or two.