

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
11th July 2019**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Martin Weale, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Planning

SUBJECT: Question from Dr Christine Hugh-Jones

The Planning Department is apparently operating new “paperless” procedures for handling incoming documents from applicants, statutory consultees, stakeholder groups and members of the public.

At the same time representations from the public and stakeholder organisations are not included on the planning portal as they are for many other local authorities.

The current procedures effectively conceal information, which is material to planning decisions, from the public view. This raises serious concerns about public accountability and public participation in the planning process

What urgent action does the Council intend to take to ensure that all relevant planning documents, including public responses to planning consultations, are available for public view on the planning portal and how will the Council engage with the public in achieving this?

Response

Following a data breach which was reported to and investigated by the Information Commissioner, the Council reviewed its procedures for managing personal data to prevent and avoid further breaches in relation to the processing of planning applications and the high volume of correspondence received from third parties. This review found that the authority faces significant continued risk of breaching the data protection regulations if it were to continue to publish third party representations on its website. In order to remove this significant risk, further staff resource would be required in order to read through and redact all personal data before publishing any third party correspondence. Unfortunately this staff resource is not available within the financial climate that the authority currently operates within. Whilst third party correspondence is not available on the Council's website, this information is available for inspection at either Powys County Hall or Neuadd Maldwyn by appointment only. An appointment is necessary because staff time has to be allowed to fully prepare the information by redacting all sensitive data.

