

Planning Committee

A meeting of Planning Committee was held on Wednesday, 14th November, 2007.

Present: Cllr Roy Rix(Chairman), Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Jean O'Donnell (vice Cllr Paul Kirton), Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Fred Salt, Cllr Steve Walmsley

Officers: C Straughan, N Schneider, D Moody (DNS) S Johnson, J Butcher (LD)

Also in attendance: No other persons in attendance

Apologies: Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Phillip Broughton, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Mick Stoker

P Declarations of Interest

91/07

There were no declarations of interest.

P Alteration to the Scheme of Delegation and Committee Site Visits

92/07

Members considered a report that presented the proposed alterations to the scheme of delegation and set out the criteria for site visits.

The Government had set out an agenda for the delivery of a planning service appropriate for the 21st century through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Barker Review of Land Use Planning, and laterally, the White Paper-Planning for Sustainable Futures. It was noted that the delivery of an expedient customer responsive service played an important part in CPA rankings and in attracting financial income through the award of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG).

It was explained that as part of the whole service review, an extended scheme of delegation was introduced in January 2004, and improvements made to Planning Committee such as a change in venue and the introduction of public speaking. In addition there was a reduction in the need for site visits by making greater use of IT display technology and digital photographs.

Furthermore, an IDea peer review was subsequently undertaken of the service and both a report and comprehensive Service Improvement Plan published in April 2007. A number of areas for improvement were highlighted, including the need to update the scheme of delegation, and the onerous requirement for signing off decisions. Members were advised that these issues had been carried forward into the Service Improvement Plan, which was approved by Cabinet and Full Council on 28th March 2007.

Members discussed the report and agreed a number of suggested changes.

With regards to paragraph 14 of the report, Members of the Planning Committee suggested that the initial request for an application to be referred to Planning Committee should be submitted to the Chair of Planning Committee, in addition to the Head of Planning. Members considered that it was important to have involvement from the Planning Committee on this matter.

In relation to paragraph 15 (d) of the report Members considered that the

number of letters/emails should be reduced from 10 to 5. Members considered that 10 letters/emails for householder applications especially, would be too many and that it could have a detrimental effect on decision making. Members suggested that, where necessary, this change should be made throughout the report.

In relation to paragraph 15 (e) Members considered that the wording '...matter of fundamental principle or precedent' was not clear. It was considered that the word 'principle', in this context, was open to interpretation and that the definition of 'fundamental principle' provided at Appendix 3, paragraph 5 did not provide clarification. Members agreed that the wording should be changed to '...matter of clear planning reasons and precedent...'. Members suggested that, where necessary, this change should be made throughout the report.

In relation to paragraphs 17 and 18 of the report Members discussed the signing off of applications. Members considered that, as Councillors were elected to represent the public, ward Councillor comments should carry more weight. Members suggested that the words 'statutory' and 'ward Councillor' be inserted into paragraph 18 to read, 'However the Development Services Manager will be called upon to arbitrate/sign off applications in cases where there is an outstanding statutory consultee or ward Councillor comment contrary to officer recommendation that cannot be resolved'.

Members discussed the protocol for Site Visits. Members of the Committee agreed that a protocol was necessary, but raised concerns over the wording of the current protocol. In particular, it was considered that bullet point 4 of paragraph 30 was too negative and should be re-worded to 'The public, applicant and objectors may attend the meeting and can be invited by the Chair to point out a factual point or feature on site'. Members of the Committee also suggested that the last sentence of bullet point 4 paragraph 30 be made a separate bullet point.

It was suggested that Cabinet and Council approve a protocol for Site Visits be produced by Officers (the Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport and the Chair of Planning Committee).

RESOLVED that the Planning Committee's comments, as detailed below, be forwarded to Cabinet.

1. The initial request for an application to be referred to Planning Committee be submitted to the Chair of Planning Committee, in addition to the Head of Planning.
2. The number of letters/emails of representations contrary to the officers recommendation which would trigger the matter being referred to planning committee be reduced from 10 to 5.
3. The wording be changed from '...matter of fundamental principle or precedent' to '...matter of clear planning reasons and precedent...'.
4. The words 'statutory' and 'ward Councillor' be inserted into paragraph 18 to read, 'However the Development Services Manager will be called upon to

arbitrate/sign off applications in cases where there is an outstanding statutory consultee or ward Councillor comment contrary to officer recommendation that cannot be resolved'.

5. Bullet point 4 of paragraph 30 be re-worded to 'The public, applicant and objectors may attend the meeting and can be invited by the Chair to point out a factual point or feature on site'.

6. The last sentence of bullet point 4 paragraph 30 be made a separate bullet point.

7. Cabinet and Council approve a protocol for Site Visits be produced by Officers (the Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport and the Chair of Planning Committee).