



PLANNING COMMITTEE: 13 APRIL
2017

Report of: Borough Solicitor

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SUBJECT: PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To note the success of the current planning committee public speaking procedure and to recommend its continuation subject to minor amendments

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the success of the current planning committee public speaking procedure be noted.

2.2 That the Public Involvement in Meetings Working Group be informed that planning members wish to continue with the current public speaking procedure, subject to the minor amendments indicated at Appendix 1.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The current Planning Committee public speaking procedure was introduced in May 2003. The procedure provides opportunities for members of the public to address committee where they fall into three broad categories:

- Anyone who has written objecting to a planning application and who has been consulted under the neighbour notification procedure, or his/her representative.
- Parish clerks (to represent the views of the Parish Council) or his/her representative.
- The applicant, or his/her representative (but only where it has been agreed a third party objecting to the proposal may speak).

- 3.2 The procedure has proved very successful in engaging members of the public and has had a positive impact on the decision making process. It is estimated that since its introduction over 750 members of the public have spoken at Planning Committee.
- 3.3 The public speaking procedure has been carefully designed around 5 core principles to ensure that it is:
- Balanced and fair to all parties concerned
 - Controllable - operating within clear guidelines
 - Proportionate in terms of the total meeting agenda
 - Not time wasting or repetitious
 - Providing a positive benefit to the decision making process.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 28 September 2015 the Public Involvement in Meetings Working Group recommended that public speaking should also be introduced at meetings of Cabinet, Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Audit and Governance Committee and Standards Committee. Following consideration at Cabinet and Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Council resolved that public speaking be introduced at these meetings with effect from April 2016.
- 3.5 The Working Group considered that a review of the Planning Committee public speaking arrangements was unnecessary at that time, but as part of its on-going work programme, a review of the arrangements would take place 12 months after implementation of its proposals with regard to the meetings referred to at paragraph 3.4 above. Accordingly, a meeting of the Public Involvement in Meetings Working Group has been arranged for 21 April 2017.

4.0 PROPOSALS AND NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Given the success of the current public speaking procedure it is recommended that the current arrangements be continued, subject to minor amendments. The suggested amendments are designed to provide members of the public with greater clarity as to their eligibility to speak, the notice period they need to give and the procedure that will be adopted at the meeting. Other amendments are made to reflect changes to planning terminology and to provide up to date references to how members of the public can find out the decision made by Planning Committee if they are not in attendance at the meeting.
- 4.2 A "track change" version of the procedure showing the suggested amendments is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 At its meeting on 21 April 2017 the Working Group will take into account the recommendations of Planning Committee before making its own recommendations to the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny

Committee, Cabinet and Council, as appropriate. The current public speaking provisions will remain in place in the meantime.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

5.1 Public speaking at Planning Committee provides an opportunity for members of the public to engage in the planning process at the point where decisions are about to be taken. This improves transparency in the planning process and helps to ensure more effective decision making.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The current public speaking arrangements are presently accommodated within existing resources. Any extension of the current public speaking arrangements, which is not recommended at this time, would require an assessment of additional resource requirement.

7.1 RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 The report recommends only minor changes to the current public speaking. These changes are designed to provide greater clarity and to reflect changes to planning terminology.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Article.

Equality Impact Assessment

A formal quality impact assessment is attached at Appendix 2 to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Planning Committee Public Speaking Procedure showing suggested "track changes"

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment