

<b>Key Decision Required:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>In the Forward Plan:</b>	<b>No</b>
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## **CABINET**

**15 JUNE 2011**

### **REFERENCE FROM SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY COMMITTEE**

#### **A.2 ATTENDANCE AT TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS BY PLANNING OFFICERS**

(Report prepared by Sarah Stevens)

#### **PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION**

##### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To report the consideration of attendance at Town and Parish Council meetings by officers by the Service Development and Delivery Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011 (Minute 33 refers).

##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Service Development and Delivery Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011 considered the decision made in 2003 to cease the practise of planning officers attending Town and Parish Council meetings on a regular basis due to lack of staff resources and cost implications. The Committee resolved that:-

The Cabinet be informed that this Committee regrets the decision of the Council to cease attendance at Town and Parish Council planning meetings by the District Council Planning Officers but accepts that the restoration of such regular visits will not take place in the current financial climate for the Council. However, the Committee makes the following comments for the Cabinet to take into consideration:-

- (i) That Planning Officers should be made available to attend Parish/Town Council meetings when large and complex planning applications are being considered.
- (ii) That any training provided by the Council to Parish and Town Councils on general planning matters be held both in the daytime and in the evening for the convenience of those who wish to attend such training.

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet consider the comments made by the Service Delivery and Development Committee

## PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

### DELIVERING PRIORITIES

This delivers a key principle of the Council's Delivery Plan to engage better with the communities in Tendring.

### FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

There will be cost implications associated with attendance at evening meetings of Town and Parish Councils and other training sessions as officers will be able to take time off in lieu of the hours spent. This could also have a minor effect on production in terms of meeting targets for determining planning applications. In addition, there would also be additional mileage cost involved in travelling to and from such meetings.

**Risk** - There are no material risks

### LEGAL

None

### OTHER IMPLICATIONS

**Equality and Diversity**- None

**Area or Ward Affected** – All

**Consultation/Public Engagement** – Council's Service Development and Delivery Committee invited all Town and Parish Councils to their meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011 to express their views.

## PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### BACKGROUND

In 2003 the Council decided to cease the practise of planning officers attending the Town and Parish Councils on a regular basis. This decision was taken due to the lack of staff resources and the cost of attending the meeting of 27 Town and Parish Councils.

Since that time, planning officers have attended some Town and Parish Council meetings (on the invitation of the town or parish council) on an ad-hoc basis when there have been discussions about large and complex applications or when the Local Development Framework or other planning policy documents have been under discussion and where there has been a high level of public concern.

In recognition of the needs of town and parishes for help in engaging in the planning system, a number of initiatives have been introduced and further initiatives are being considered to aid the councils.

1. The Council has invested in providing up to date and interactive information on the Public Access and Council's Planning pages of the website. Regular training is also provided for parish clerks in the use of such material.
2. Officers are currently working with the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) to prepare some generic guidance for parish councils when dealing with applications. This has been drafted and is with EALC for their agreement and distribution to parishes.
3. EALC are also looking to put in place, with assistance from this Council's officers, a package of training for parishes on planning matters.
4. A planning officer attended the Tendring District Association of Local Councils (TDALC) meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2010. It was agreed at that meeting that this would be repeated annually so that TDALC members can raise issues and questions with planning.
5. The Head of Planning Services will always consider sympathetically requests for attendance when large and complex applications are being considered or there is a key element of the LDF process being undertaken.

#### **APPENDICES**

None.