

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2011

REFERENCE FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE

A.2 WRITTEN ADDENDUM

PLANNING MATTERS: LOCAL PROTOCOL FOR COUNCILLORS

(Addendum prepared by Clare David)

Introduction

At its meeting on 8 March the Planning Committee considered proposed revisions to Planning Matters: Local Protocol for Councillors. Members of the Committee resolved that the proposed amendments to the Protocol should be approved and referred to the Standards Committee for formal adoption at its meeting on 14 March 2011, subject to a written addendum to the report with the comments of Members of the Planning Committee and indicating those comments which were universally supported by Members of the Committee.

This report provides an update to the Standards Committee on the comments of the Planning Committee. After each update an indication is given as to whether universal support was offered by the Planning Committee.

Proposed Amendments

Section 7 Reports to Planning Committee; Paragraphs 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5

Paragraph 7.3 (second bullet point): Wording to be amended to make the proposal clearer as follows: “an executive summary of the Officer’s recommendations (to include a summary of each of the conditions where an application is recommended for approval and the reason(s) for refusal where the recommendation is one of refusal)”.

(UNIVERSALLY SUPPORTED BY PLANNING COMMITTEE)

Paragraph 7.4: It was suggested, and agreed, that where significant changes occur after the finalisation of the Officer report that the Head of Planning Services will defer consideration of the relevant application rather than ‘may defer’.

(UNIVERSALLY SUPPORTED BY PLANNING COMMITTEE)

Paragraph 7.5: Members requested clarification of what assistance Officers were able to provide Members with that would comply with their professional code of conduct. After discussion it was agreed that Members of the Planning Committee would be provided with a copy of the Royal Town Planning Institute’s Professional Code of Conduct.

(UNIVERSALLY SUPPORTED BY PLANNING COMMITTEE)

Section 9 Planning Committee Site Visits; Paragraphs 9.2 and 9.3

- Paragraph 9.2: Concern was expressed that the proposal to hold site visits on the day of Planning Committee for all those applications being considered at the formal meeting of the Planning Committee later the same day may prejudice Members in full time employment from being able to sit on the Planning Committee in the future. Concern was also raised with regard to Members undertaking unaccompanied, independent site visits and that whilst it was understood that Members should not enter into discussion on the merits of applications that they should be able to listen to views that are expressed.

Members discussed these concerns and highlighted a number of advantages to the proposal including: introducing uniformity in the determination of applications; the ability of all Members, after viewing the sites, to gain a clearer understanding of the issues involved when making a decision and that these would be fresher in their minds; that if site visits could not be undertaken during the day in the working week then visits on Saturdays and Sundays may have to be considered; that visits needed to be undertaken during daylight hours and not in the evenings.

It was also pointed out that a number of meetings and Committees currently take place during the day. Members wished the Independent Remuneration Panel be requested to review allowances in light of increased duties arising from the proposed regular scheduled formal site visits.

(UNIVERSAL SUPPORT BY THE PLANNING COMMITTEE WAS NOT REACHED)

NOTE: If the proposal to introduce regular scheduled formal site visits is approved, it is intended that these will commence after Annual Council on 17 May 2011 when the new timetable of meetings is agreed.

- Paragraph 9.3 to be deleted on the basis that members declaring a prejudicial interest are able to attend the formal Planning Committee and should, therefore, be able to attend the site visit.

(UNIVERSALLY SUPPORTED BY PLANNING COMMITTEE)

Appendix 1

To make the intention of the guidance clearer the following amendments (highlighted in bold) are proposed:

“WHAT SCHEMES WILL BE CONSIDERED?”

*The level of pre-application engagement **by Members and Officers** will depend on a range of considerations, including: the scale and complexity of the proposal; and the willingness of those proposing the development to*

*engage in the process. It is more likely that **Members will become involved in pre-application discussions on major proposals of strategic importance that will shape the future of our communities and help to deliver the Council's aspirations in the Local development Framework (LDF); the Corporate Plan; and the Sustainable Community Strategy.***

The schemes will be selected for consideration by the Head of Planning Services (or their representative). The agreement of the developer will always be necessary.

*The majority of pre-application discussions **on more minor proposals** will continue to be undertaken by officers. However, this does not preclude the involvement of Members in minor proposals where it is held that these may be of particular significance to a local community. This will be at the discretion of the Head of Planning Services (or their representative). The same guidance applies, regardless of the scale and nature of the proposal.”*

(UNIVERSALLY SUPPORTED BY PLANNING COMMITTEE)