

Guidance note on the operation of Planning Committee

Purpose of guidance:

- To provide a structure to enable members to secure all the information required to determine applications and make a full and effective contribution to the decision
- To ensure clarity for the public in the operation of Committee
- To ensure consistency in consideration of all applications
- To assist members in the manner in which they present views and arrive at their decisions
- To ensure the different roles of members and officers are clear and apparent to all attending committee

Members Role in Planning

Members' over-riding duty is to the whole community, not just to the people in their Ward and, taking into account of the need to make decisions impartially, they should not improperly favour, or appear to favour, any person, business, group or locality.

Members must act as independent arbiters of the case and issues before them and make planning decisions openly and impartially, with sound judgment and for justifiable reasons.

Prior to attending Committee

Members:

- Will have read the report in full and considered what the main issues are
- Will not have prejudged the application prior to hearing the officer presentation, public speaking and the subsequent debate
- If any points of factual information or advice are required, members will, as far as possible, contact Officers beforehand so that the information can be supplied either in advance or at the meeting, thereby avoiding unnecessary deferrals
- Members may request individual briefings from Planning Officers on applications at any time after their registration

Officers:

- Will have ensured that the reports to Committee provide a comprehensive assessment of the policy issues and material considerations relating to the case and will contain a recommendation
- Will ensure that all potential speakers will have been contacted
- Will provide members with any necessary additional information or advice to assist prior to the meeting

Committee meeting process

1- Chair of Committee introduction

- Commencement of meeting with an explanation of the role of the Chair.
- Introduction of members/officers/emergency procedure
- Explanation of process – i.e. – presentation, member discussion, proposal, voting
- Explanation that it will be made clear when a decision has been made and what it means

2-: Preliminary Matters

1- Declarations of interest – members to advise on interests in accordance with the code of conduct. Legal advice may be provided to members if necessary

2 – Consideration of submissions received after the publication of the Agenda placed before members at the start of the Committee. Members will be advised of the content of the additional submissions and be advised to read them immediately before the officers presentation.

3 Presentation and Public Speaking

1- Officer presentation on each application – summary of main points only as full details will be incorporated in the written report– use of powerpoint presentation for visual presentations of plans, drawings, layouts, elevations and other illustrative material which was not included in the report

2 - Recommendation from officer – All reports will have a recommendation. This will be clearly stated at end of the presentation

3– Public speaking to take place where requested

4 – Ward Councillor speaking to take place where requested

4 Member Discussion

1- The Chair will invite questions of fact/clarification from members to officers– no submission of views at this stage. Officers will respond to queries with factual information

2 - When all information received – member discussion. The discussion phase will be guided by the following principles:

Members shall consider planning matters only. They will consider the relationship of the proposal to the Local, Regional and National planning policy framework, including all relevant site specific and general supplementary planning guidance and best practice guidance which will have been set out in the report. The impact of proposals on neighbours and the local community will be considered within the framework of planning guidance and local standards

Members must set aside their role as local councillor and act as independent arbiters of the case and issues before them, in the manner of a board of inquiry

Decisions must be made on the totality of the relevant planning information before the Committee, derived from the report, the officer presentation, any site visit and relevant Planning considerations arising from public and Ward Councillor speaking at Committee. Members must consider carefully the degree of importance to be given to each relevant planning matter before concluding on the proposal

At the discretion of the Chair, Officers will respond to additional requests for factual information or clarification which would facilitate Members in making their decision

During the course of debate, Members will look to avoid repetition and will endeavour to add new points to the discussion

Officers may also, at the discretion of the Chair, put forward factual information where that may be necessary to ensure a decision is made in full possession of all relevant facts

Contrary Recommendations

As the decision makers at Committee, Members have the authority to make a proposal which is contrary to Officers' recommendation. Such a proposal must be accompanied by sound planning reasons. The Officers will assist Members in the wording of the reasons and will be invited to advise against any which they can demonstrate to be insubstantial. If the contrary proposal is passed, the wording of the reasons will be finalised by the Head of Planning and Engineering.

If required, the press and public may be excluded to permit the giving of sensitive planning and legal advice

All applications

If members consider it appropriate to add a further condition to a recommendation for approval, they may do so, provided that the opportunity is provided to officers to make any comment on the implications and appropriateness of such a condition

The Chair will make it clear upon which motion/amendment the vote is to be taken

The vote will be taken

The chair will state the decision of the Committee on the application following the vote