



Report To: Planning Committee

7 May 2014

Lead Officer: Legal and Democratic Services Manager

Public Speaking Protocol – Review of arrangements at Planning Committee meetings

Purpose

1. To conduct a review of the public speaking protocol and, specifically, to consider the order in which speakers should speak.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Planning Committee endorses the draft protocol attached at Appendix A (incorporating Option (b) in paragraph 8 below), and adopts it for use with immediate effect, subject to officers being given delegated power to make any minor typographical changes.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The protocol needs to be reviewed at regular intervals in order to remain effective, relevant and understandable.

Background

4. At its meeting on 24 May 2007, Council resolved that public speaking at Planning Committee be introduced, and that the Planning Committee be authorised to review and amend the scheme at its discretion, Part 4 of the Constitution being amended accordingly.
5. Planning Committee last reviewed the protocol in May 2013.

Considerations

6. Public speaking at Planning Committee meetings, which includes contributions from local Members not on the Committee and members of parish councils, has been well received generally, and has allowed applicants, their agents, and objectors to take a greater part in the planning application process.
7. During the past few years, public speaking has operated well, but unforeseen circumstances have arisen from time to time, which have been dealt with under the Committee Chairman's general discretionary powers. During the past 12 months, one comment has been that applicants have no opportunity to respond to Parish Council and local Member objections.

Options

8. (a) To leave the order for speaking as it is, namely

- (1) Objector
- (2) Supporter (usually the applicant or planning agent)
- (3) Parish Council representative (but not the Clerk)
- (4) Local District Councilors

(b) To leave the order for speaking as it is, but to amend the Protocol as follows:

“...The Planning Committee welcomes public speaking and participation from outside of the Committee’s membership. Other than Members of the Planning Committee and the Council’s officers, there are four main categories of other people able to speak at meetings of the Committee: -

- (1) Objector
- (2) Supporter (usually the applicant or planning agent)
- (3) Parish Council representative (but not the Clerk)
- (4) Local District Councillors

subject to the Chairman having the discretion to invite back the applicant to address objections, in no more than two minutes, from the Parish Council and local Councillors...”

(c) To amend the order for speaking as follows

- (1) Objector
- (2) Parish Council representative (but not the Clerk)
- (3) Local District Councillors
- (4) Supporter (usually the applicant or planning agent)

Implications

9. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Equality and Diversity

10. The protocol is available electronically and in hard copy. Provision has been made for the document to be provided in alternative formats. Democratic Services Officers can advise verbally about the protocol’s main requirements.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

12. External consultation was not deemed appropriate.

Effect on Strategic Aims

13. The introduction of, and subsequent agreement of improvements to, the public speaking scheme, enables effective engagement by residents and parish councils with the decision-making process.

Background Papers

None

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