



Report To: Planning Committee

3 June 2015

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 paragraphs 8 and 9.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Planning Committee endorses the draft protocol attached at Appendix A, reflected the changes highlighted in paragraphs 8 and 9 of this report, and Appendix B (changes included).

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 2014 but did not make any changes to the Protocol agreed 12 months earlier.

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.
8. Recent experience has shown how difficult it is to estimate what time individual applications will be considered at meetings. Factors such as withdrawal of earlier items from the agenda, the number of public speakers, and unforeseen circumstances can all play a part. Therefore, it is proposed that formal advice should be that all public speakers should be in the Council Chamber at the beginning of the meeting.

9. At the meeting in May, a Parish Council was represented by an agent, Although the current protocol requires Parish Councils to be represented either by elected or co-opted Councillors, it is the case that applicants and objectors sometimes appoint agents. There have been a few instances where local Members have been represented by other Members. There is no legal reason why Parish Councils should not be represented by agents. Officers propose therefore that Parish Councils should be allowed to appoint agents, and that those agents should include their Clerks.

Options

10. To leave the public speaking protocol as it is, namely as agreed in 2013 and reaffirmed last year.
11. To endorse and adopt the protocol, as amended and set out in Appendix A to this report.
12. To amend the protocol in some other way, perhaps omitting the proposals set out in either paragraph 8 or 9, and perhaps reflecting other issues.

Implications

13. 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

14. 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)

15. External consultation was not deemed appropriate.

Effect on Strategic Aims

- 16.. 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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