



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# **Public Speaking at meetings of the Planning Committee**

May 2020

## **1. What is the Planning Committee?**

- 1.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Committee is a Regulatory Committee consisting of elected Councillors. It is responsible for determining matters which cannot be dealt with under powers delegated to officers.

## **2. When and where do Planning Committee meetings take place?**

- 2.1 The Planning Committee meets in the Council Chamber at South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA and/or via such remote means as the Council may publicise. Further details, including dates and times of meetings, contacts, directions, variations to dates / venue and web links to remote meetings are available on the Council's website by visiting [www.scambs.gov.uk](http://www.scambs.gov.uk) and following the links from 'The Council', or by emailing Democratic Services at [democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk) or telephoning 03450 450 500.

## **3. Can anyone attend Planning Committee meetings?**

- 3.1 Meetings of the Planning Committee are open to the public, so anyone can listen to meetings. Where a meeting is held remotely, members of the public and press may listen to the proceedings at the virtual meeting and a web link will be published on the relevant committee page of the Council's website at least 24 hours before the meeting. A range of people with differing interests in specific applications observe these meetings, whether they are applicants or an applicant's agent, objectors, neighbours or other residents, local District Councillors or members of Parish Councils.
- 3.2 Despite being a public meeting, in some very occasional cases, the law does allow the committee to consider some matters in private. For example, an application may contain information of a personal or commercially sensitive nature that the Council would not be able to publicise. In every case, however, the public interest in excluding the press and public from the meeting room must outweigh the public interest in having the information disclosed.

## **4. Can anyone speak at Planning Committee meetings?**

- 4.1 The Planning Committee welcomes participation from outside of the Committee's membership. All registrations to speak or submissions of written representations must be made direct to Democratic Services in accordance with the procedure set out in paragraph 5.3 below. 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: -

- (a) 1 x Community Objector or objector's agent
- (b) (i) 1 x Applicant (or applicant's agent)  
(ii) 1 x Community Supporter **if** (and only if) the officer recommendation is refusal, or the applicant or agent forego their right to speak)
- (c) 1 x Parish Council representative (elected or co-opted Councillor, agent or Parish Clerk)
- (d) Local District Councillor(s) or another Councillor appointed by them.

- 4.2 Parish Councils and local District Councillors may speak as part of the planning process, regardless of whether they support or oppose an application. Objectors and Supporters speak as part of the specific application. Where more than one objector or supporter requests to speak, they must agree between themselves on a presentation that covers all their concerns. Where the officer recommendation is approval, a Community Supporter will only be allowed to address the Committee if the applicant, or applicant's agent, forego their right to speak.
- 4.3 The same person is not allowed to address the committee in more than one of the speaker categories. Where speakers have competing interests, such as community objector and Parish Council representative, they should choose their dominant interest prior to registering to speak, and delegate the other role to another representative if need be.
- 4.4 In exceptional circumstances, the Committee Chair may opt to make special arrangements, such as where a neighbouring parish is perceived as being significantly affected by a proposal.,
- 4.5 It is impossible to say at what time each application on the agenda will be discussed. Public speakers should therefore be prepared to address the Committee at any time after the beginning of the meeting.

## 5. How may people make representations?

- 5.1 In view of the Coronavirus emergency, Planning Committee meetings may be conducted wholly remotely; or, at a later date if social distancing restrictions permit, in a meeting room with a proportion of the membership participating remotely; or wholly in a meeting room in the traditional manner. The method by which the meeting will be conducted will be indicated on the Council's website.
- 5.2 In order to enable public representations to be managed smoothly, arrangements for participating in committee meetings will operate on the basis indicated below. The operation of the scheme may be further reviewed by the committee from time to time.
- 5.3. Public representations may be made **either** by written representations, **or** by a request to speak by each of the four categories of speakers listed in paragraph 4.1 above. Each written submission, or request to speak, **must** be sent/made to [democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk) by no later than 4.00pm, two clear working days before the meeting (ie: on a Friday where a committee meeting is held on a Wednesday), together with details of the person making the representation; which of the categories of speakers they fall into, and contact details, including an email address and a telephone number on which they may be contacted. For the avoidance of doubt, it is not permissible to make written representations **and** to also register to speak at the meeting. However, those registering to speak will be invited to submit written representations which shall only be used as a backup should their connection to speak at the meeting fail. Each such representation must be capable of being read out within three minutes.
- 5.4. Where a person is unable to submit their representations electronically, they should telephone Democratic Services on 03450 450 500, in order that their representations may be transcribed over the telephone.

- 5.5 Where an interested party has opted to submit written representations and to forgo the opportunity to speak at a meeting in accordance with paragraph 5.3 above, copies of such representations submitted by the deadline will be circulated to committee members and published on the Council's website.
- 5.6 Registered speakers will be sent a link to join any meeting to be conducted remotely, normally at least 24 hours before the meeting. Speakers will be invited to join by teleconference, or, as and when the Council's video conferencing platform and a speaker's own IT hardware permits, by video conference. Where a virtual meeting is taking place, the ability to participate in the meeting (as opposed to view it online) will depend upon access to a computer with camera and speakers and software capable of engaging with the Council's systems. The Council cannot be responsible for the provision of such equipment and software and it will be for participants to satisfy themselves that their equipment meets the appropriate requirements (information on such requirements will be published online).

## 6. How are applications considered?

- 6.1 The appropriate planning officer will introduce the item.
- 6.2 Committee members will then hear any speakers' presentations. The Chair shall indicate when each speaker may address the meeting. The order of receiving representations shall be as stated in paragraph 4.1 above. Each speech is limited to three minutes. This applies even when the applicant (or applicant's agent) and a Community supporter both address the Committee, as detailed above – the objector may still only speak for three minutes. The Chair, or an officer designated by the Chair, shall indicate when the allotted time of three minutes has been used up. Speakers should restrict themselves to **material planning considerations**. The Council's website [see link below] contains further information on material planning considerations and issues that cannot be taken into account when considering an application.

Link: [View or comment on a planning application](#)

- 6.3 Committee members will have read the written reports prepared for them, so speakers should try to avoid repeating points that are already explained in that material.
- 6.4 Speakers should be careful not to say anything derogatory or inflammatory, which could expose them to the risk of legal action. Speakers shall be required to observe appropriate meeting etiquette, which shall be shared with them in advance of the meeting. If a speaker does not observe the meeting etiquette, or otherwise interrupts or disrupts the meeting, the Chair shall warn the person concerned. If they continue to fail to observe the meeting etiquette or continue to interrupt or disrupt the meeting, the Chair shall order the removal of that person from the meeting.
- 6.5 If those registered to speak are not present in the meeting at the time the relevant item is considered, the Committee will not be able to wait, and will determine the application – officers will be able to say whether a particular item is at the beginning, middle or end of the agenda, but cannot give an accurate idea of when it will be considered

- 6.6 After the objector and supporter have spoken, exceptionally, the Chair, or Committee members through the Chair, may ask speakers to clarify matters relating to their presentation.
- 6.7 The Committee will then debate the application and vote on either the recommendations of officers in the agenda or a proposal made and seconded by members of the Committee. Should the Committee propose to follow a course of action different to officer recommendation, Councillors must give sound planning reasons for doing so.
- 6.8 In the event that the Chair identifies a failure of the remote participation facility at any meeting involving remote attendance, they will declare a short recess while the fault is addressed.
- 6.9 If it is not possible to address the fault and the meeting is inquorate, the meeting will be adjourned until such time as it can be reconvened. If the fault is addressed and the meeting is quorate it will continue.
- 6.10 If a registered speaker is unable to join a remote meeting at the designated time or loses their connection during such a meeting, the Chair, depending on the circumstances, may declare a short adjournment to assess if the speaker can rejoin. If the speaker is unable to join or reconnect to the meeting, the Chair may still permit the Committee (having regard to overall fairness of all parties) to continue to consider the application. In such circumstances, where a registered speaker has opted to provide written representations as a backup to their verbal statement, as provided in paragraph 5.3 above), the Chair shall arrange for those representations to be read out to the Committee.

## **7. May members of the public submit written information or photographs relating to an application or objection?**

- 7.1 Yes. The absolute deadline for submitting such material to the Democratic Services Officer is 4.00pm, two clear working days before the meeting (ie: on the Friday before the meeting where the committee meeting is held on a Wednesday) (such deadline being brought forward by 24 hours for each Bank Holiday between the day of agenda publication and day of the meeting).
- 7.2 Please send such information, by e-mail, to [democratic.services@scambsgov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@scambsgov.uk) who will circulate the information for you among all interested parties (applicant, objectors, Parish Council, officers). If you are unable to send information by e-mail, please contact Democratic Services on the telephone number below. In the interests of natural justice, such information will not be distributed earlier than five working days (not including Saturdays, Sundays or Public holidays) before the meeting **Please do not supply information directly to members of the Planning Committee because of the need to identify substitute members, key Council officers and other interested parties.**
- 7.3 Speakers will not be permitted to display any documentation or photographs during a virtual meeting and are discouraged from presenting materials to physical meetings.

## **8. Privacy Notice**

- 8.1 The Council will be using third party software to conduct remote Planning Committee meetings. For online meetings, some data will be disclosed to other participants and to meeting or webinar hosts. For instance, when you attend a meeting, your name might appear in the

attendee list. If you participate by video conference, your image will be shown. For more information, the Council will refer you to the appropriate privacy policy of the software provider.

8.2 The Planning Privacy notice may be viewed by following link:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/access-to-information/planning-policy-privacy-notice/>

**The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you.**

Further information is available from Democratic Services, South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA – Telephone 03450 450 500.

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