

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

7 May 2008

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Democratic Services Manager

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Purpose

1. To review public speaking at meetings of the Planning Committee and the protocol introduced at the meeting in August 2007.

Background

2. 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.

Considerations

3. 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.
4. However, since August last year, circumstances have arisen which were not envisaged when the original protocol was agreed. In consultation with the Planning Services Portfolio Holder and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee, officers have drawn up a revised protocol to address these issues, attached to the report at **Appendix A** on the Council's website. This revision tries to reflect some of the lessons learnt so far. The main amendments are as follows:
 - (a) **NEW** Index – hyperlinked for ease of navigation online
 - (b) **CLARIFICATION** Public speaking should be allowed in respect of all planning applications and other **decision** items. Public speaking on information items (other than by local Members) will only be allowed with the agreement of the Chairman.
 - (c) **REQUEST** To assist in the effective management of the scheme, local Members not on the Committee should inform the Democratic Services Officer, before noon on the Monday before the meeting, of their intention to speak. The agenda order will be changed after that time so that items with public speaking are all dealt with before those without any public speaking.
 - (d) **CLARIFICATION** The term 'parish council representative' is replaced by 'parish council member' (either elected or co-opted). As before, the preference is that the member should be the Chairman, but the clarification makes it clear that parish council clerks cannot address the Committee.

- (e) **NEW** With the consent of the Chairman, local Members and parish councils for wards neighbouring the ward in which the application site is located will be allowed to speak.
- (f) **CLARIFICATION** Questions to public speakers prior to the Committee debate should be brief, and must be limited to seeking clarification on points already made, rather than introducing brand new elements or inducing statements that were not originally volunteered.
- (g) **NEW** A section relating to behaviour, relating specifically to
 - The interruption by the public of proceedings, such as entering the area where Councillors sit, shouting or gesticulating, and distributing papers or photographs without the Chairman's permission and other than via a Council officer.
 - The Chairman's right to clear that part of the meeting room in which there is a disturbance
 - The prohibition of any banner, placard, poster or other similar item. The Chairman may require any to be removed.
 - The prohibition, unless specifically authorised by resolution, of audio and / or visual or photographic recording equipment in any format

Options

- 5. The Committee has the option to approve the protocol attached at **Appendix A**, either in whole or in part or as amended, or continue with the existing protocol.

Implications

6.	Financial	None specific
	Legal	
	Staffing	
	Risk Management	
	Equal Opportunities	

Consultations

- 7. Consultations have taken place with the Planning Services Portfolio Holder, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee and the Development Control Manager.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

8.	Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
	None specific

Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
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.
Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
None specific

Conclusions/Summary

9. To be effective, any system of public speaking must, to some extent, be self-policing. It must be seen to be fair to everyone, and members of the Planning Committee should adhere to its general principles. A system of customer feedback is in place.

Recommendations

10. It is recommended that the Planning Committee adopt the revised public speaking protocol.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: None

Contact Officer: Ian Senior – Democratic Services Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713028