

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6th April 2016.

LEAD OFFICER: Director of Planning and New Communities.

Member Training and Development, and Technical Briefings

Purpose

1. To consider the proposed Member Training and Development Programme for Planning Committee for 2016-7.
2. To seek Members' suggestions for future items for inclusion within the Programme and the proposed Technical Briefings sessions.

Recommendations

3. That Planning Committee APPROVES the programme and make suggestions for future topics for technical briefings.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To ensure that the Programme provides for mandatory training for the Planning Committee, addresses Members' development needs and includes topics which are pertinent to nature and scale of planning proposals to help inform Planning Committee decision making.

Background

5. The Council's Constitution requires that all Members and Substitute Members on regulatory committees such as Planning Committee receive training before they are able to serve on that body.
6. Traditionally this has comprised a single half day session in late May/early June (following the Annual Council meeting and prior to the first Planning Committee of the municipal year). In the past it has provided an introduction for new members to the Planning Committee and a refresher for serving members. There has also a bi-annual coach tour around the district to look at recent developments with an emphasis on design review and an opportunity to reflect on the outcome of planning policies and decisions made.
7. An earlier agenda items sets out the protocol for the proposed pre-application and technical briefings.

Considerations

8. The Council's planning function is both important and different from other functions. It has been recognised that Members must have training in planning matters to help ensure good quality decision making which is less susceptible to successful legal challenge. The planning applications decided by Committee (rather than by officers under delegated powers), are generally the most complex and contentious ones that the Council receives.
9. Given the number, range and complexity of proposals now facing the Council, and following requests from a number of members who have identified areas where they would welcome further training and discussion, a wider programme is proposed.
10. In addition to the half day annual planning training in late May/early June and bi-annual tour round the District to review recent developments in September, two further half day sessions are proposed. It is suggested that these focus on any important changes in planning policy, guidance and practice as well as reviewing milestone appeal decisions which have a bearing on the decisions that are likely to be made by the Planning Committee.
11. A programme of non-mandatory technical briefings is also proposed. Mindful of Member's time, it is suggested that these take place ahead of each Planning Committee meeting. This follows good practice adopted elsewhere, including the Cambridge Fringes Joint Development Control Committee. It will provide an opportunity for Members to receive more detailed guidance and debate particular topics, which they might not otherwise have sufficient time to do within the meeting itself.
12. Later this year, Planning Committee will also be considering a number of applications from the strategic growth sites, for example Cambourne and Northstowe. The promoters of Waterbeach and Bourn are also preparing Development Framework Documents. Appropriate briefings and site visits will be added to the programme.
13. An initial draft programme is set out in Appendix 2, and Member's suggestions for further topic would be welcome.
14. In parallel, planning training is also planned to support Parish Councils, where appropriate joint training will be arranged.

Options

15. The Member Planning Training and Development could remain in its current form, however that would not respond to identified needs nor the growing demands on the service and Planning Committee, in particular.

Consultations

16. The proposed Member Planning Training and Development Programme and technical briefings have been discussed with and are supported by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Planning Committee, the Planning Portfolio Holder and the Strategic Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder.
17. It is presented as a draft programme for Planning Committee to consider. A draft programme of future technical briefings is also attached for consideration.

Conclusions

18. Member feedback is welcomed on the proposed programme for Planning Training and Development Programme and Technical Briefings.
19. The Programme will ensure that the mandatory training for the Planning Committee, as required by the constitution, is delivered. The programme and technical briefings between them aim to address Members' development needs and includes topics which are pertinent to nature and scale of planning proposals to help inform Planning Committee decision making.

Implications

20. **Financial**
The programme and briefings will largely be provided by Officers from South Cambridgeshire District Council or Partner Authorities. As such any costs will be minimal.

Legal

21. The Member Development Training Programme is mandatory to Members of Planning Committee and Substitute Members

Staffing

Officers will be given sufficient time to prepare and deliver the programme. Discussing key topics and sharing knowledge and experience between officers and members will encourage closer working and a stronger service.

Equality and Diversity.

The member development programme will be open to all members.

Environmental Implications

24. There are no environmental implications arising from the proposals.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed Training and Development Programme.

Appendix 2 – Proposed Programme of Technical Briefings

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Appendix 1 Proposed Draft Member Development Programme (Mandatory)

Date	Meeting	Venue and Programme Lead
<p>June</p> <p>Date/time tbc</p>	<p>Annual Planning Refresher Training (and Introduction for new members) to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Planning Committee and Probity. • National Planning Policy Framework and Practice guidance • The Local Plan • Development Management • Material Considerations • S106 agreements • Appeals • Monitoring and Enforcement 	<p>South Cambridgeshire Hall</p> <p>Head of Development Management and Head of New Communities and Colleagues</p>
<p>Friday 15th July</p> <p>10am – 1pm</p>	<p>National Planning Policy and Guidance (including any recent changes) and milestone appeal decisions</p> <p>Joint Event with SCDC Parish Councils</p>	<p>South Cambridgeshire Hall</p> <p>John Williamson (Cambridgeshire Spatial Planning Unit and Planning Inspector)</p>
<p>September</p> <p>Date/Time tbc</p>	<p>Tour round the District reviewing recent developments.</p>	<p>Coach Tour</p> <p>Head of Development Management and Head of New Communities and Colleagues</p>
<p>Wednesday 23rd November</p> <p>1.30-4.30pm</p>	<p>National Planning Policy and Guidance (including any recent changes) and milestone appeal decisions</p> <p>Joint Event with Parish Councils</p>	<p>South Cambridgeshire Hall</p> <p>John Williamson (Cambridgeshire Spatial Planning Unit and Planning Inspector)</p>

Appendix 2 Proposed Draft Programme of Technical Briefings (Non Mandatory)

Date	Topic
6 th April	Cumulative Impact
22 th April	Pre-application Proposals - Bannold Road Waterbeach
11 th May	Drainage
1 st June	Sustainable Development
July- March	Topics to be confirmed

All briefings will held at 9-10am in the Council Chamber before Planning Committee

Suggested Future Topics:

- Northstowe and Cambourne (ahead of considering any applications)
- Viability