

**PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

**INFORMAL MEETING**

**11 October 2004**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Beveridge – Portfolio Holder for Planning - (Chairman) (P)

Baxter (P)

Bennetts (P)

Beveridge (P)

Davies (P)

Darbyshire (P)

Evans (Apologies received)

Jefferies (P)

Johnston (P)

Mitchell (P)

Pearson (P)

Read (P)

Saunders (P)

Sutton (P)

Tait (P)

Also in attendance:

Councillors Cook and de Peyer

Officers in attendance:

Mr R Cooper – Director of Development Services

Mrs S Proudlock – DC Team Manager

Mrs T Otudeko – Principal Solicitor

Mr D Shaw – Principal Committee Administrator

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1. **AREA COMMITTEES – DO WE WANT THEM?**

1.1 **East West split between the Planning Teams**

The Committee discussed the east-west split between the Planning Teams.

ACTION:

1. That the DC Team Managers provide a map of the District showing the division between the east and west teams.
2. That the DC Team Managers consider whether a different geographical division would be more appropriate.

1.2 The Committee discussed the merits of retaining meetings within the Guildhall, Winchester, or establishing Area Committees.

### 1.3 Venue

The Committee discussed venues for Planning Development Control Committee meetings in the context of Area Committees. The Committee discussed whether The Guildhall, with its technical improvements in terms of sound and vision, represented the optimum location for all Planning Development Control meetings and if the same level of service could be provided in outlying village halls.

It was suggested that perhaps Area Committees could take place within The Guildhall building utilising the facilities available but only considering applications from a defined geographical area within the District. It was suggested that perhaps a survey to assess public demand for Area Committees could be undertaken.

### 1.4 Consistency of Decision Making

Members questioned whether the consistency of decision making would be at risk if the Committee membership varied between Area Committees. However, it was also recognised that a small core of Members, for example the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, could be common to all meetings to ensure that consistency of decision making remained.

### 1.5 Public Pressure

It was also commented that more public pressure would be placed on Members to support local opinion in Area Committee venues. This might affect the requirements of the Committee to take a balanced view and to take into consideration the interests of the applicant, in accordance with the probity rules.

### 1.6 Conclusion

Following further debate, the Committee concluded (by a majority of 11 - 2) that the present arrangements for Committees should be retained, but if there were particular concerns in a certain geographical area of the District then the facts behind these concerns should be established to see if these issues could be successfully addressed.

It was also agreed that improvements to the present working practices of the Planning Development Control Committee might also address some of the concerns that had led to the consideration of Area Committees being established.

## 2. **IMPROVED FORMAT OF PLANNING REPORTS INCLUDING PLANS AND DRAWINGS CIRCULATED WITH AGENDA AND DISPATCH OF PLANS - FEEDBACK**

#### ACTION:

1. Planning Officers to be more selective in deciding the plans, pictures and scheme drawings to be reproduced in the pack of plans and drawings that is produced for Committee. (DC Team Manager)
2. That the plans and drawings be incorporated within the text description of items in order that a single document is produced. (DC Team Manager).

3. That for site visits accurate and informative site plans be provided for Councillors, including for example the location of the nearest main road where the site is in a rural location. (DC Team Manager to supply copy to Committee Administrator).

3. **OFFICER PRESENTATIONS – COULD THEY BE IMPROVED?**

The DC Team Manager explained that all items subject to public speaking together with major and complex schemes were presented for the benefit of the public audience.

The Committee explored whether the DC Team Managers should present all items or if presentations should continue to be shared with more junior members of staff.

**ACTION:**

1. That the present practice of presentation by all DC officers be continued.

(a) with the DC Team Manager ensuring the continuous improvement through coaching and training of junior officer presentations and

(b) using their discretion as to whether the more controversial and major schemes need to be presented by the DC Team Manager, and alternatively, whether a presentation is required at all.

2. That in presenting reports, the term “as set out” be discontinued (as this may not be informative to the public present at the meeting), to be replaced by the phrase “I recommend approval (refusal) of the application as set out in the report.” (DC Team Manager).

4. **NEW AUDIO AND VISUAL EQUIPMENT – FEEDBACK**

The new audio and visual equipment in the Walton Room, The Guildhall, was well received.

**ACTION:**

1. That the planning officers continued to practise with the presentation equipment in order to obtain continuous improvements.

2. That the table layout be slightly more angled in order that Members can comfortably view the large screen.

3. That where possible video clips of application sites be used.

5. **PARISH AND OBJECTOR/SUPPORTER 3 MINUTES SLOT – FEEDBACK AND ARRANGEMENTS AT VIEWING SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Committee thought that the introduction of a 3 minute slot for Parish Councils to address the Committee had worked well. It was noted that this was popular and had to some extent mitigated the demand for the introduction of Area Committees.

A Member commented that if the Parish Council spoke in agreement with the issues raised by an objector and perhaps these issues were again reiterated by a Ward Member, the time allocated to objectors in total was out of balance with that allocated for supporters of the scheme and the applicant. He suggested that thought should be

given to having equal time allocated for both supporters and objectors to an application.

Consideration was also given to the length of time allocated for Ward Members to speak.

**ACTION:**

1. That the present arrangements for Parish Councils to speak for 3 minutes to be continued.

2. That no time limit be introduced for Ward Members but that they be encouraged through the Chairman to limit their comments to a 3 minute period where possible.

**6. VIEWING SUB-COMMITTEES/CRITERIA FOR SUB-COMMITTEES – HOW WELL ARE THEY WORKING?**

**6.1 Sub Committees**

The Committee noted that the procedure for setting up planning site visits was as set out in part 5 page 30 of the Code and Protocol within the Constitution of the City Council.

A Member commented that there did appear to be some inconsistency on which applications were the subject of a Sub-Committee and those that were not. He cited a number of examples of some major schemes that would have benefited from a Sub Committee's detailed consideration but this had not taken place and the application had been submitted directly to the Committee.

At present the DC Team Manager discussed with the Chairman whether a scheme met the criteria of the Protocol in that it was contentious, complex, large scale, listed building, in the conservation area or involved a mix of ownerships. The outcome of this discussion would determine if a Sub-Committee was established through Committee.

Members discussed whether they should be more proactive in studying the weekly list of applications or gather evidence of issues within their Wards to contact the DC Team Manager or the Chairman to suggest a Sub-Committee could be appropriate for a certain scheme.

**ACTION:**

1. That the present arrangements for calling Sub-Committees (other than Viewing Sub-Committees) be kept under review.

2. That the item on the agenda of PDC meetings be placed at the end when Members and Officers can assess the need of applications to be subject to a Sub Committee.

**6.2 Viewing Sub-Committee**

The Committee also discussed the functioning of the Viewing Sub-Committee.

## ACTION:

1. That where a Viewing Sub-Committee has been held, it be made quite clear to all those present that there will not be the opportunity for further public speaking again at Committee. (Chairman to remind those on site – Committee Administration to amend leaflets to make this clear).

2. That when the Viewing Sub-Committee is ready to make its decision, Members of the Sub-Committee should assemble together (but within listening distance of the public present) in order that proper deliberation of the officers' recommendation can take place without interruption by members of the community. (Chairman to remind those on site).

## 7. **LENGTH OF COMMITTEE – CAN IT BE STREAMLINED IN ANY WAY AND START TIME**

### 7.1 Frequency and start times

The Committee debated if its meetings should commence at 10.00 am or 1.00 pm. Following debate, and a split decision by those present on amending the commencement time, the Committee agreed that meetings should continue to commence at 2.00 pm for the remainder of this municipal year.

There was general consensus that the holding of meetings on two consecutive days should be retained.

### 7.2 Agenda Order

The Committee discussed whether the more controversial and major schemes, which attracted more members of the public, should be taken first on the agenda.

## ACTION:

That DC Team Manager take a more proactive approach to the order of items on the Schedule of Development Control Applications with the aim of giving priority to those likely to attract public speaking.

### 7.3 Public Participation

The Committee considered whether improvements needed to be made to providing information to Members of the public attending the meetings.

## ACTION:

1. That the Public Speaking Coordinator provide a list of the order of public speakers on the day to members of the public, to be placed on the public seats within the Walton Room and to be displayed at the entrance.

2. That a score board system be introduced to indicate the item under consideration by the Committee.

3. That the Director of Development Services explore the cost of installing a score board system that is visible from other rooms within the Guildhall, for example from reception and the Courtyard Café, in order that

members of the public would have prior notification of when to be in attendance in the Walton Room for their item to be considered.

8. **CRITERIA FOR ITEMS COMING TO COMMITTEE**

It was commented that after recent changes to amend the criteria for items being referred to committee from Parish Councils and from four or more objectors, the system seems to be working satisfactorily. The delegation to the Director of Development Services had been amended to reflect these changes.

9. **COMMITTEE VOTING AGAINST THE OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee agreed to retain the present practice of delegating the application to the Director of Development Services and the Chairman for detailed consideration of the reasons. In the case of a resolution to refuse permission, the decision should be referred back to the Planning Development Control Committee where there were no realistic grounds for defending the decision at an appeal.

10. **DETAILS OF COSTS AWARDS AT APPEALS**

The DC Team Manager explained that the award of costs was not made at the time of the Planning Inspector's decision.

ACTION:

That the Committee be informed of the award of cost at appeals when the amount has been settled.

11. **PUBLICITY FOR VIEWING SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Committee discussed the display of site notices advertising that a Viewing Sub-Committee or a Sub-Committee (including Telecommunications Sub-Committees) were taking place. It was agreed that evidence needed to be obtained that the site notices had been displayed.

ACTION:

1. That a photograph be taken at the time of display to indicate date and time and position of the display of notices. (DC Team Manager).

2. That an explanation of the operation of the planning system, the procedures for calling Viewing Sub-Committees and advertising be contained in the Council's Insight newsletter. (Director of Development Services and Committee Administration).

12. **ADVANCE NOTICE OF WARD MEMBERS' INTENTION TO SPEAK AT COMMITTEE**

ACTION:

That advance notice from Ward Members wishing to speak at Committee be encouraged in order that their names can be incorporated within the list of public speakers for display on the day of the meeting. (Chairman to write to all Councillors).

13. **PLANNING PROTOCOL**

ACTION:

1. That the protocol be updated to reflect recent changes.  
(Committee Administration).
2. That training be provided on material considerations and policy considerations for new Members serving on the Committee. (Director of Development Services in consultation with Committee Administration).

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 12.40 pm

Chairman