

PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

25 May 2006

MONITORING OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS BY INDEPENDENT MEMBERS AND  
PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

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RECENT REFERENCES:

ST51 – Monitoring of Committee Proceedings by Independent Members and Parish Representatives – 5 April 2006

ST34 – Monitoring of Committee Proceedings by Independent Members – 17 May 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

During the first two months of this year the independent members and parish representatives of the Council's Standards Committee monitored proceedings at the Planning Development Control Committee (12 January), Cabinet (7 February) and Principal Scrutiny Committee (13 February).

On 5 April the Standards Committee considered a report which set out:

- (i) comments arising from that monitoring, and
- (ii) what actions would be taken where particular actions had been identified

This report draws Members' attention to the comments and actions relating to the Planning Development Control Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the Planning Development Control Committee note the contents of this report.

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#### Report of Director of Development

#### DETAIL:

##### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Standards Committee is responsible for issues of probity, ethics and behaviour of councillors. It monitors the compliance of councillors with the National Code of Conduct and develops local protocols and guidance. It must have at least one independent person, who is not a member or officer of a local authority, co-opted on to the committee by the Council. It must also have one parish representative in attendance when parish issues are considered.
- 1.2 This report draws Members' attention to the comments and actions arising from the monitoring of committee proceedings by independent members and parish representatives in relation to the Planning Development Control Committee.
- 1.3 There were a number of points made, which are summarised in the table below, along with resultant actions.

| <b>Comment</b>  | <b>Action</b>   |
|---|---|
| Additional signage to meeting room                              | Guildhall Manager to provide  |
| Councillor nameplates not always visible                        | Chair to remind Members to ensure nameplates visible at all times and investigations into use of name badges to be carried out. |
| Use of officers first names during the meeting can be confusing | Officers full names to be used by Councillors each time they speak  |
| Cramped space in the public gallery                             | Chairs to be better arranged but the amount of public space is reasonable   |
| Lack of clarity about order of agenda items                     | List to be distributed at start of meeting and on door of meeting room  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Three minutes speaking not sufficient for major applications  | No proposals to change this at the current time. Additional speaking time would extend the meetings even further                      |
| Chair summarised points on major applications well, but on other applications responses to queries were not always adequate | Chair/officers to try to ensure responses were full and clear on all items  |
| Not all Members can be clearly heard at all times   | Members and officers to be reminded to speak clearly and directly into the microphone.  |
| Planning Protocol followed properly   | Noted   |
| Declaration of interests at start of meeting sometimes not clear as people still settling                                   | In addition to noting the interests at the start of the meeting they should be re-iterated for each application when it is considered |
| Balance of discussion achieved by the Chair was fair  | Noted   |
| Clarity of decision reached was generally good  | Noted   |
| Some difficulties with understanding some of the acronyms used and which part of the report Members were referring to.      | To be addressed in training   |

- 1.4 It should be noted that on the most important issues of clarity and balance in decision making the comments made were positive ones which the Committee can build upon.
- 1.5 It is considered that the other items raised can be addressed by a combination of training, increasing Members awareness of the concerns and by intervention where appropriate from the Chair, and when considering the detail of this report the Standards Committee resolved the following:
1. That the Independent Members and Parish Representatives be thanked for undertaking the monitoring work.
  2. That, subject to the above, the recommended responses arising out of comments made be agreed and the City Secretary and Solicitor requested to pursue these matters accordingly, in particular that:
    - (a) Members of the Planning Development Control Committee be reminded to declare an interest (and give a brief explanation of the nature of that interest) when the item arises on the agenda, in addition to the Committee Administrator announcing that interest at the start of the meeting.

- (b) During committee meetings, both Members and officers should be referred to by surnames and/or job titles to aid public understanding about who is speaking and their role at the meeting.
  - (c) The wearing of name badges by Members and officers at meetings of Planning Development Control Committee and Licensing and Regulation Committee be commended.
3. That the appropriate points made in respect of the Planning Development Control Committee be incorporated into the specific training session held for Committee Members, which will take place at the beginning of each Municipal Year.
  4. That the specific suggestions for improvements made by the Independent Members and Parish Representatives be drawn to the attention of all group leaders, in the context of the general conclusion that the committee structure is working well and the points made by the Independent Members and Parish Representatives will be adopted.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

##### 2. CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 2.1 Effective performance monitoring assists in meeting the objective “to make the best use of all available resources” and will contribute towards managing the Council effectively.

##### 3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1 No additional resource implications.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Files held in City Secretary and Solicitor's Department

#### APPENDICES:

ST51 – Monitoring of Committee Proceedings by Independent Members – 5 April 2006