

Agenda Item 12

Development Management Committee

12 January 2009

CEH



Public Speaking Procedure and Guide to Planning Committees

Summary

Public Speaking was introduced to the Development Management Committee in January 2009. The Scheme has now been running under a pilot system for a year and it is proposed that Members consider the formal adoption of a speaking procedure for both the Development Management and Planning Inspections Committee. In addition, following a number of high profile and contentious planning applications it has been requested to include the adopted speaking procedure into a guide explaining the function and decision making processes of the Development Management Committee.

Recommendations

1. that the Public Speaking procedure for both Development Management and Planning Inspections Committee as set out in 'Guide to Development Management and Planning Inspections' booklet be adopted.
2. that Members approve the 'Guide to Development Management and Planning Inspections' booklet for general circulation.

a) **Reasons for Recommendation**

The recommendation represents a logical response to the developments as set out in the report.

b) **Alternative Options**

To continue with the pilot speaking procedure.

c) **Risk Considerations**

The decision for adoption of public speaking was taken in 2008. The adopted scheme has been considered by the Council's Democratic Services and Legal Services teams and is considered appropriate.

d) **Policy and Budgetary Considerations**

If agreed, the procedure would become the adopted speaking policy for both the Development Management and Planning Inspections Committees.

e) **Date for Review of Decision**

Speaking procedures can be reviewed for any Committee during the year.

1 Main Body of the Report

- 1.1 Public speaking was introduced to Council Committees following the decision of Annual Council on 14 May 2008. At that time it was agreed that Public Speaking should be introduced to the then Development Control at the earliest opportunity and after the Systems Thinking Review had taken place. As agreed by Council, the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman introduced a pilot scheme in January 2009.

- 1.2 Since January 2009 the speaking procedure at the Development Management Committee has remained largely unchanged and in practice has been very successful in allowing supporters, objectors, agents, applicants and Parish Councils to attend meetings and express their positions directly to the Committee. Although there are sometimes a large number of speakers, particularly with contentious applications, in general, meeting time has not been adversely effected. The ability for the public to express views directly to the planning Committees is greatly appreciated by the public and clearly demonstrates the Council's wish for fair and open government.
- 1.3 The procedure adopted at the Development Management Committee differs slightly from other Council committees in that there is no fifteen minute 'open' question time at the start of each meeting. It is recommended that this remains unchanged as without a general speaking session, comments can be focussed on individual planning applications. Although the scheme is based on that used at the Planning Inspections Committee, there is no requirement for prior notification to speak as with the Planning Inspections Committee. It is recommended that this slight difference in procedure between the two Committees is standardised and that both Committees adopt the system currently used at the Development Management Committee: no prior notification would required to speak and speakers would enter their name on to a list available near the entrance to the Council Chamber to indicate their intentions.
- 1.4 Following a number of high profile and contentious planning applications in 2009, it became apparent that many members of the public do not fully understand the often complicated planning meeting procedures. The Chief Executive advised that a booklet be produced explaining the function and decision making processes of the Development Management and Planning Inspections Committees. (attached)

It would seem appropriate and timely to include the public speaking procedure for those Committees in this guide. The Guide and recommended speaking procedure is brought before Members for consideration and adoption.

Legal Implications

There are no legal observations.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Background papers

Existing Speaking Procedure used at Development Management Committee
Guide to Development Management and Planning Inspections

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&
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Development Management Committee
8 December 2009