

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Development Control Committee</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>25 November 2009</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Adoption of a four week committee cycle</b>	
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Michael Ovenden – Head of Development Control – (01799) 510476</b>	Item for decision

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## Summary

- 1 This report recommends that the current gap between Development Control committees is extended from three weeks to four weeks in order to concentrate the reducing number of cases into fewer meetings with slightly longer schedules.

## Recommendation

That the Committee agrees to hold its meetings every four weeks from 13 January 2010 and recommends to Council the revised dates for the meetings.

## Background Papers

None

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	NA
Community Safety	NA
Equalities	NA
Finance	Unquantified savings in holding fewer meetings
Human Rights	NA
Legal implications	NA
Sustainability	Unquantified resources saved in holding fewer meetings
Ward-specific impacts	NA
Workforce/Workplace	Reduction in Member and officer time in preparing and attending meetings and associated savings in time and resources through having four fewer meetings each year.

## Situation

- 2 The Development Control Committee agendas and schedules have been getting shorter and the duration of each meeting has been reducing commensurately. Some recent meetings have been over within half an hour. The reduction in the number of applications considered at each meeting has been particularly noticeable in recent months but has been happening over a period of years. In 2005/6 the average length of schedules was approaching nine applications, five had more than ten applications and one had fifteen cases. In total one hundred and forty six cases were considered by the committee that year. The following year the number dropped to one hundred and thirty four and in the next two years the number dropped further to one hundred and sixteen/seventeen. The average number of cases fell to around seven although an appreciable number were approaching double figures. So far this year the average number of cases at each committee has been less than five. At this rate the total number for the year 2009/10 is unlikely to exceed eighty. At the time of writing this report the schedule for this committee meeting has not been finalised but is likely to be very short, dropping the average still further. It is worth noting that the delegation agreement has not altered materially in this period and is therefore not the reason for this trend.
- 3 Officers have been monitoring this trend for a number of months and see no reason to expect the trend to be reversed. Each committee meeting takes up member and officer time, both in attending and preparing; uses resources in the production of papers; ties up the Chamber for the day; uses steward's time and limits use of the car park. To invest these resources in seventeen short meetings is not the best use of resources. To address this situation it is recommended that the gap between committees be extended from three to four weeks. This would reduce the number to thirteen committees each year, slightly more than one each month. It should act to increase the number of cases to a more worthwhile level.
- 4 Monthly committees have been considered – that would result in twelve meetings each year - but discounted as it may lead to confusion because there would be a number of five week gaps while most would have four week gaps. Having a clear four week cycle would provide clarity for all. In informal discussions with colleagues from other authorities it appears that a four week cycle is not uncommon. It is not anticipated that the change from three to a four week gap will have a detrimental effect on determination rates.
- 5 If there is an increase in the number of applications in the future such that committee agendas become unmanageably large then the committee may decide to review the frequency of its meetings. Furthermore there have been examples of extraordinary meeting being held to consider large or complex applications – airport expansion, development at Friends School and the

## Adoption of a four week Development Control Committee cycle

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Linton Windfarm – and it will remain possible to arrange these where appropriate.

- 6 It is proposed that the first Development Control Committee of 2010 will occur on its currently planned date of 13 January and thereafter the gap would become a four week gap. Therefore the dates for the remainder of the Council year will be 10 February, 10 March, 7 April and 5 May 2010.