

**PLANNING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM on THURSDAY,  
12 MAY 2022 at 2.00 pm**

Present: Councillor S Merifield (Chair)  
Councillors P Fairhurst, R Freeman, M Lemon and J Loughlin

Officers in attendance: N Brown (Development Manager), A Lindsell (Democratic Services Officer) and P Swarn (Lawyer)

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2022 were approved as accurate.

**3 TOPICS FOR QUARTERLY TRAINING/BRIEFINGS FOR THE COMING YEAR**

The Development Manager noted the significant training recently undertaken by the Council for Members and Officers and highlighted the need to focus on regular training. He identified biodiversity and sustainable urban drainage systems as pertinent areas for further training and offered to liaise with Place Services and Essex County Council regarding provision of bespoke training sessions.

Members discussed the following training topics;

- Sustainable drainage systems, to include maintenance
- National planning policy framework, to include amendments and the tilted balance
- The development contribution document
- Review and comparison of recent appeal decisions
- Conservation areas and building on heritage
- Viability assessment
- The changed role of the Committee during the designation process
- Essex Highways decision making process and guidelines
- Appealing designs

The Development Manager asked how Members would want the training delivered and suggested that training sessions could be introduced at the Little Canfield site after site visits.

He noted that the Planning Advisory Service have advised that they are a free resource to be used and offer good quality training.

Following Member discussion regarding the burden for Members who work full time, the Chair made the following suggestions:

- Training could be held in the evening
- Training sessions could be recorded for those unable to attend
- Online interactive computer based training could be introduced

RESOLVED: The Development Manager resolved to coordinate a list distributing the training over the year.

#### 4 **IMPLEMENTED SCHEME VISIT**

The Development Manager suggested that a whole day event be coordinated for a Members tour of completed sites. He requested that Members provide input regarding the selection of sites to visit.

Members agreed that the tour would be undertaken by coach and that lunch would be provided.

RESOLVED: Democratic Services to send a calendar invitation to Planning Committee Members for a tour of completed site from 9:30 – 16:00 on 29 September 2022.

#### 5 **ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE CORPORATE CHANGE PROGRAMME**

The Chair explained the need to consider alternative venues for Planning Committee meetings and noted that the audio-visual equipment was not yet installed at the Little Canfield site.

She suggested that meetings could be alternated between the Little Canfield site and the Saffron Walden chamber. Alternatively one meeting in four could be held in Little Canfield.

Members discussed:

- Historically meetings were split between the Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, worked well and would encourage the provision of good meeting spaces.
- Walpole Meadow in Stansted may not have a large enough space.
- The need for Members allowances to increase in line with the significantly increased workload as a result of the designation.
- The need to reintroduce the provision of lunch in recognition of the worth of the dramatically increased hours invested by Members.

The Development Manager highlighted the need to review timings of Committee meetings.

#### 6 **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The Chair resolved to send the letter to the Chief Executive on Monday regarding the audio-visual system.

The next meeting is scheduled for 14 June 2022.

*The meeting ended at 14:54.*