

**PLANNING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM on TUESDAY,  
14 JUNE 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 12 May 2022 were approved as accurate.

**3 TRAINING FOLLOW UP**

The Chair requested feedback from the Planning Training held on Friday 11 June 2022.

Members agreed:

- that the training was helpful and useful and set at an appropriate level
- they would like the slides from the session to be circulated to Members
- it was unfortunate that not all Members could attend

The Chair noted that the morning session was attended mainly by Planning Committee Members whereas the afternoon session had only two Planning Committee Members. This led to two very different experiences, both of which were useful.

The Development Manager confirmed that he would be offering a training session to Members who were unable to attend. This would take place before the next Planning Committee meeting.

Councillor Loughlin noted that she had asked the trainer whether the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) were infallible and detailed a current case where a Council took the PINS to a higher level.

The Lawyer confirmed that the PINS do get challenged on occasion, in the High Court where they could be challenged on the misapplication of policy and fact and soundness of appeal inspector's decisions.

In respect of applications considered by PINs under designation, the Lawyer confirmed that elected Members can make representation directly to PINS representing their wards as they are not the decision makers on designated applications.

The Development Manager confirmed that the second application to the PINS had only just started. Members are therefore not part of the decision in that situation and are liberated to make representation should they wish to. He went on to reiterate the Planning Advisory Service trainer's view that Uttlesford was not the worst performing council on the list and suggested that other authorities would also be designated. He noted that for now Uttlesford had the PAS's undivided attention and were using it to their advantage.

Councillor Lemon asked whether Uttlesford would remain in delegation until the Local Plan was in place.

The Development Manager confirmed that Uttlesford would definitely be designated until February 2023 and would be judged on their figures and behaviour. He explained that the Local Plan would help with making appropriate decisions and prevent unacceptable sites getting approved with the current predisposition for approvals using the tilted balance.

#### 4 **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The Development Manager shared his proposed Members Training Schedule from September:

- 29 September - Committee tour – followed by a debrief
- October – Biodiversity – request submitted to Place Services – 2.5 hour session
- November - SUDS and water infrastructure – request submitted to Tim Simmons – may require a second session
- Autumn – Regulation 18/Tilted balance – is a difficult message – PAS to deliver
- January – Heritage – bitesize session – don't want Place Services to deliver
- February – Viability – to be delivered by an independent third party who is practising with the public and private sector
- March – Highways – bitesize session – run by Essex Highways

Councillor Freeman detailed a reputable viability specialist previously raised to the interim director. The Development Manager asked Councillor Freeman to forward the details to him.

The Development Manager detailed new Building Control regulations that come into practise 15 June 2022 which would also require training.

Councillor Freeman suggested using the Town and Country Planning Association to provide training.

Members discussed:

- the need for sustainability training
- the need to encourage as many attendees as possible at training sessions
- the need for design training, noting that PAS offer a self-taught training module

The Development Manager noted the need to ensure key Members are available for the training sessions.

Councillor Freeman said that Members have always avoided having an opinion on design due to it being subjective. He believed that this should change, alongside the implementation of enforced heat pump installation.

Councillor Loughlin questioned whether applications should be refused on design grounds. The Chair clarified that it was more to move towards input relating to design than refusing on design grounds.

The Development Manager agreed that there has been movement over the last twenty years and that design was now a consideration.

Councillor Freeman requested that planning presentations were sent to Members in advance of the meeting. The Development Manager agreed.

The Development Manager suggested that it might be necessary to arrange a further site tour. He agreed to circulate details to Members.

The Chair resolved to reinstate lunch for Planning Committee when Members know that the meeting will run into the afternoon.

The Development Manager confirmed this was a Democratic Services decision, and that they had turned down the request.

The Chair said that she would speak with the Democratic Services Manager.

Councillor Freeman said they allowances should be increased in response to the additional work undertaken by Planning Committee Members as a result of the designation, extra meetings, site visits and time spent on planning matters.

Councillor Lemon requested an update on the sound system. The Chair confirmed that the Chief Executive had attended a meeting in the Chamber the previous evening. The meeting had eventually been abandoned due to technological issues.

Councillor Lemon said that they wanted to know what systems were being considered, prior to decisions being made regarding the new audio-visual system.

The next meeting was scheduled for 13 July 2022.

*The meeting ended at 15:15*