

**PLANNING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP held at MICROSOFT TEAMS,
on WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2023 at 2.00 pm**

Present: Councillor S Merifield (Chair)
Councillors R Freeman, J Loughlin and R Pavitt

Officers in attendance: N Brown (Head of Development Management and Enforcement), C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer) and P Swarn (Lawyer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lemon and Fairhurst, as well as Dean Hermitage.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Pavitt.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

3 DLUHC PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Head of Development Management and Enforcement provided a progress update on the DLUHC Performance and Improvement Action Plan. He highlighted the work carried out in six areas: Policy Framework, Monitoring and Progress Management, Pre-application, Applications Assessment, Planning Committee and Staffing and Recruitment

Members discussed the matters within the document, and the following was noted:

- The draft action plan was to be considered at an upcoming meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. Members requested this be taken to the Planning Committee for their consideration also.
- Officers were working towards having a Community Involvement Protocol, agreed by Parish and Town Council, which supplemented the Statement of Community Involvement. As part of this work, they were looking to establish closer working relations with Great Dunmow Town Council (GDTC); however this had not been straightforward due to GDTC not having a designated member of staff which Council officers could liaise with.
- The Chair requested that Democratic Services look at the attendance records on the Council's website as the data appeared to include future

meetings of the Planning Committee. Members asked if the data publicised could be for historical meetings only.

- At the discretion of the Director of Planning, all major Planning Applications were currently being brought to Planning Committee. The Head of Development Management and Enforcement believed that they would continue to do so and later reminded members to use careful consideration when making their decision on Section 62A applications.
- There had been good improvements to the Planning Committee as all officers were now presenting in-person and each staff member in attendance had their clear area of jurisdiction. The layout had changed to ensure the Chair of Planning had direct access to the Development Manager and Lawyer during the Committee, but it had not addressed the issue of the top table being off-camera.
- Recruitment of staff had not been very successful; however this was a nation-wide problem due to a shortage of planning professionals in the public sector. Officers were looking at bringing in career-grade planners who could then progress.

The Head of Development Management and Enforcement said that he hoped that the designation would be lifted by 2023/24, but there were some upcoming appeal decisions which may likely impact this.

Members requested that a copy of the Action Plan be circulated after the meeting.

Cllr Pavitt left at 14:56

Meeting ended at 15:00