

## Planning Committee Working Group

Working to make the Planning Committee operation more user friendly

11<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Meeting 1 notes & decisions

Present: Cllr Merifield; Cllr Storah; Cllr Lemon; Cllr Pavitt; Cllr Loughlin; Nigel Brown; Gordon Glenday

Apologies: Cllr Gerard

### 1. Extension of maximum period of time allowed for town / parish council representatives.

It was felt that it was important that Town and Parish Councillors were given the same length of time to speak as District Councillors are. Therefore, from the **August** Planning Committee Meeting they will be allotted **five minutes** to make their comments / representations

See **Action 2 below** re timing mechanism

### 2. Extension of maximum period of time allowed for public speakers.

The discussion centred round giving public speakers some more time to make their representations. It was felt that there must still be a little leeway 10 -15 secs to finish their sentence. However, it was decided that either or both the timer to be on show or sound or light indicators to let speakers know they were close to end of their allotted time. Therefore, from the **August** Planning Committee Meeting public speakers will be allotted **four minutes** to make comments / representations

**Action:** Nigel Brown / Gordon Glenday /Cllr Merifield – to explore and bring the most efficient and user friendly timing mechanism for **all speakers**

### 3. Removal of limit on number of public speakers

At present there is a cap of 10 speakers, 5 for and 5 against generally I believe, plus of course developer/agent/applicant. Those wanting to make representation at present must contact democratic services stating whether they are for or against. Therefore from perhaps return to when there was no maximum number, there was concern that there could be too many and committee times could be extended beyond practicable times. There was also a discussion about the accumulative time given to applicant/agent/developer to speak. Therefore, from the **August** Planning Committee meeting there will be 10 speakers but Democratic Services will not have to allot to for and against.

Also the **maximum** time for applicants/ agents/developers will be **fifteen minutes**. (suggest this may be less if number of speakers e.g. 3 public speakers)

N.B. Major applications or controversial ones will be considered on an individual basis  
**Please Note** in relation to **discussion point 6** it was felt that **written representations should be included for those who cannot be present.**

**Action:** Nigel Brown; Gordon Glenday; Democratic Services; Cllr Merifield

### 4. Allowing town/parish council representatives to comment on statements made by applicants / agents.

Therefore, from this **August's** Planning Committee the chair will invite any factual clarification (not statements) before committee goes into discussion.

**5. Allowing limited number of town / parish council representatives to attend, and participate in site visits.**

It was felt by those present after a discussion of possibilities and possible problems that it would be appropriate for two representatives of either a town or parish council to be informed of, invited to attend and participate in site visits.

Therefore, for the **visits** for the **August Planning Committee** the relevant town or parish council will be informed that they can have two representatives, should they wish to attend and participate in the site visit. Initially the representatives to approach Nigel Brown as it was felt that this would appear more appropriate and could not be misinterpreted. This will be reviewed.

**Action: Nigel Brown; (Democratic Services?); Cllr Merifield**

**6. Changing meetings from afternoons to evenings.**

The idea of this was related to allow more residents/ members of the community that work to attend planning meetings. It was felt that we as a responsible council have a duty of care to the officers and the councillors who could be driving some distances especially in the winter. To be fair to those that work the meeting would have to start at 7pm or more likely 7.30pm therefore a meeting might not finish until 10 – 10.30pm or perhaps even later. This was felt unacceptable for safety and that officers and councillors might not be able to give full and proper attention to applications.

Therefore, at present this suggestion is not going forward to be actioned. However, see **discussion point 3** for the addition of the reading out of submitted written comments.

**7. Introduction of 'area committees' to be held at appropriate venues in the district.**

It was decided to keep the committee in Saffron Walden as it is at present. It was however suggested that major applications in the Dunmow area could be taken to committee in Great Dunmow.

**Action: Nigel Brown; Gordon Glenday; Cllr Merifield** to find the most appropriate venue;  
**Working Group:** definition of a major application (size)

**8. Restructuring of committee reports to reflect the decision making process.**

The officers have already been thinking that the structure of officers reports needs changed. Cllr Storah explained that he feels the reports e.g. are not balanced and that for ease of reading and understanding the recommendation should come first and then the explanation of how it was reached. It was agreed that this is an ongoing piece of work to be brought back to the next working group for an update.

**Action: Cllr Storah** to give exemplar reports of the type he suggests so that N Brown and G Glenday can work on a template format. (ongoing)

This is a very positive start to this process, the above decisions or actions will be monitored and reviewed to see how they are working or progressing.

Thank you all for being so positive and contributing to improving the experience of and functioning of the Planning Committee.

The next working group date will be confirmed.

Cllr Sandi Merifield

Chair of Planning Committee

