

PLANNING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM on MONDAY 25 JULY 2022 at 2.00 pm

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

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Freeman.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2022 were approved as accurate.

3 MAJOR APPEAL BRIEFING

The Director of Planning detailed the recent and current major appeals:

- The Warish Hall inquiry closed a few weeks ago, the decision was anticipated by the end of August
- The Eastwood Quarry inquiry was due to close this week and had been called in to the Secretary of State, the decision was anticipated by November
- An appeal had been lodged for 200 dwellings on the Helena Romanes School site in Great Dunmow. The developer has approached the Council to see if there is anything they can do to avoid the appeal. The Director of Planning said that he was going to have a discussion with them but would request that the developer made a presentation to Planning Committee who had originally considered the application.
- The Griffin Place inquiry was scheduled to start in September. There were five Essex Highway reasons for refusal but the developer had been working with Essex Highways and have satisfied the reasons for refusal. The Director of Planning said that this did not indicate a failure of Planning Committee, just that the issues had been ironed out by the developer.
- The Director of Planning said that he had met with Saffron Walden Town Council and Ashdon Parish Council and advised on the Highways reasons for refusal.

The Chair asked that major appeals be reported to Planning Committee to note, and also the outcome to the appeals, with links on the agenda for Members to access.

Councillor Lemon agreed that would be useful.

Councillor Loughlin asked whether solar farms counted as major applications. She said that it didn't help not having a solar policy

The Director of Planning said it was important to feedback on solar decisions, for Officers and Members.

4 **TRAINING UPDATE**

The Director of Planning ran through the previously circulated draft Members training schedule.

He asked how Members wanted to run the training sessions and suggested in-person sessions for larger topics only.

The Chair asked whether there were online training packages available and suggested that they were followed by a round up to review.

The Director of Planning said that he would look into online training packages. He said that he would invite Officers to Members training sessions. He said that a finance training session had been requested by the Chief Executive at Full Council last week.

Members agreed that all the training items were important, although some topics would take less time to cover.

Councillor Lemon said that solar farm training would be beneficial.

Councillor Loughlin suggested that all Members would benefit from the solar farm training. She said that she would be happy to attend virtual meetings.

The Director of Planning suggested inviting Planning Leads from Parish Councils to the training sessions.

Members agreed that would be useful.

The Chair said she would go back to Planning Committee to ask how they found asking questions before going in to debate at Planning Committee. She asked those present for their opinions.

Councillor Pavitt said that it was useful and logical. He said that he thought Members would benefit from being reminded of the process.

Councillor Loughlin agreed although she didn't see the need for a specific slot.

Councillor Lemon said that asking questions just after the Officer was useful and more efficient.

The Development Manager said that it did not preclude asking a question before the meeting or indeed after the question, should the need arise.

The Director of Planning said that in his experience such arrangements were best practice. He said that it provided structure, looked more professional and was a good way to run the meeting.

The Chair said that Members don't usually ask questions of speakers.

The Director of Planning said that a number of Councils do now ask questions of Speakers who may be better able to clarify local matters. He said that it would have to be within the Constitution but could be explored if Members wished.

The Lawyer said that it would be acceptable and that the working protocol could be set into the Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee. He said that it was important to not confuse members of the public in terms of the proceedings of the Planning Committee but that it wouldn't be difficult to amend the Constitution if necessary.

The Director of Planning said that following on from the Stansted Airport Review Council had committed to set up a new Task and Finish Group. He said that changes to the Constitution could go to that group.

Councillor Lemon said that he wanted lunch to be reinstated for full day meetings. He also requested an update on the audio visual system.

The Director of Planning said that he would mention the audio-visual system at CMT next week.

The Chair said that she had listened to a recent meeting and the broadcast had been acceptable, although she could hear rustling through the recording.

The Democratic Services Officer said that the Democratic Services Manager was investigating the reintroduction of sandwich provision. The next meeting was scheduled for 24 August 2022.

The Chair asked for a calendar of the training, which the Director of Planning agreed to provide.

The Chair said there was no bus for the site tour next week due to only visiting one site.

Cllr Lemon gave his apologies for the site tour.

The meeting ended at 15:08