

PLANNING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2023 at 1.20 pm

Present: Councillor R Freeman (Chair)
Councillors J Emanuel, M Lemon, J Loughlin and M Sutton

Officers in attendance: N Brown (Head of Development Management and Enforcement), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager) and C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present: Councillors N Church and J Evans.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pavitt.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

3. **MEMBERS' TRAINING PROGRAMME**

- **Enforcement Training-** to double up with Parishes. Consider running two sessions, one at Saffron Walden and one at Little Canfield. The need was stressed for all Members to attend. Nigel Brown to action.
- **Viability Training-** to run session before Christmas. Nigel Brown to action.
- **Appeals Workshop-** pick up heritage harm issues and interesting cases. Perhaps utilise Thomas Muston (Place Services) and get legal input from barristers. Nigel Brown to action.
- **General –** For consideration: under previous Administration training sessions were held at lunchtimes. Need to demonstrate on-going training arrangements in place to DLUHC. Utilise professional experts and ensure interactivity. Some Parish Councils already very switched on- look for possible cluster groups for training purposes. Drainage training to be picked up as a future item. Members need to be kept informed of any changes to NPPF. Some discussion about the involvement of substitutes took place. Nigel Brown to action.

4. **TRANSPORT TO SITE VISITS**

Discussion took place around the merits of bringing back the coach. General agreement to arrange for a coach prior to 27th September meeting that would pick up from Little Canfield and Saffron Walden. Nigel Brown to take forward with provider.

5. **SPEAKING PROTOCOL AT PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- Discussion took place around reviewing the current allocation of up to 10 public speakers + Ward Councillor + Parish Council (PC) + Applicant/Agent. Need to encourage democracy and representations but members of the public could feed into the process through their PC's. Idea put forward of maximum of 5 public speakers. Current time allowances were considered reasonable. Members to re-consider whether Applicants/Agents have a right to speak in cases recommended for approval where no other speakers have registered. Ben Ferguson to bring back a written report.
- Discussion about Rules of Debate (Specifically Rule 12 and how it should apply to Planning Committee). Current rules state that there should be a motion (proposed and seconded) on the table before any debate takes place. This does not happen. The system of asking questions of officers first is working well. Members considered that they wanted to hear discussion points raised prior to making any proposals. This would still be possible if a motion was on the table as it could always be withdrawn or amended. Concerns expressed as to how this would look to the public. Consideration also to be given as to how many times Members could speak during a debate to stop the ping-pong effect. This was in the hands of the Chair. Ben Ferguson to bring back a written report.

6. **SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

The Strategic Director of Planning is working on this. Council looking to get re-designated first by DLUHC. Need to reduce business. Call-in works well. Possibility discussed of taking away some of the smaller items and matters such as Section 73A planning applications and deeds of variations with the agreement of the Chair and Vice-Chair; the need to take the views of Parish Councils into consideration was stressed. Dean Hermitage and Nigel Brown to take forward.

7. **FUTURE REPORTS TO PLANNING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP**

- Revised Speaking Protocol – Ben Ferguson.
- Revised Scheme of Delegation – Dean Hermitage and Nigel Brown.
- Revision to Constitution (including pre-application involvement and appeals) – need to look to be crisper moving forward with a better protocol and improve levels of material. Further data in respect of the outcomes of appeals to be included in future monthly report to Committee. Nigel Brown to action.
- Date of Next Meeting – late October 2023- Democratic Services.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm.