

PL19/57.
(13)

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the report of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee which detailed a number of proposed changes to the public speaking scheme for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), then onward recommendation and approval via Cabinet to full Council.

In 2016, the Council adopted a petition-based Public Speaking Scheme (PSS) that formed part of the Council's Constitution and was to be kept under review for its effectiveness; since its adoption there had been one review undertaken by the previous Planning Committee Chairman and Head of Strategy and Planning. Following research undertaken of neighbouring authorities' schemes, Appendix 3 appended to the report set out a proposed revised scheme. The Chairman thanked the officers for the preparation and research that had gone into compiling the report.

The Chairman highlighted the perceived shortfalls in the current scheme which included the requirement to organise a petition of 10 signatures or more within the 21 day statutory notice period; the requirement to identify one spokesperson to represent all the various views of objectors / supporters; the inability of Parish and Town Councils to speak without a petition; the inability to use visual aids and the Chairman's explicit discretion.

The proposed revised scheme no longer required the submission of a petition, included a slot for Parish and Town Councils, non-Planning Committee Ward Members, up to three speakers in support or against for major applications (up to two for Minor/Others and one speaker for and against for household applications) and was considered a much improved scheme. Visual aids would also be acceptable if they had been included in any representations submitted as part of the application process. It was advised that speakers would be allocated on a first-come, first served basis and the proposal that the scheme be administered by Democratic Services was achievable within current resources.

In order to ensure adherence to the time constraints and for Ward Members to feel that they had sufficient time, it was agreed that non-Planning Committee Ward Members speaking under the scheme be encouraged to submit a brief summary of the issues they would raise in advance of the meeting which would be circulated to the Planning Committee.

Whilst not directly related to the public speaking scheme, Members raised concern over Councillors who called-in applications to the Planning Committee and who were then not present to address the Planning Committee on the rationale for the call-in; there had been one such occurrence at this meeting. Clearly, there would be occasions where extenuating circumstances prevented a Member from attending

the Planning Committee, even if they had called-in an application for consideration. The Committee agreed to recommend that Members calling in an application must attend the relevant Planning Committee, send a Member on their behalf, or provide an apology / reason for non-attendance.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the proposed revised public speaking scheme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report and revised Code of Practice document as set out in Appendix 4 to the report be agreed and referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for onward recommendation and approval; and thereafter any minor changes to the public speaking system and/or the Code of Practice to be delegated to the Executive Director in consultation with the Chairman of Planning;
- 2) non-Planning Committee Ward Members speaking under the scheme be encouraged to submit a brief summary of the issues they would raise in advance of the meeting to be circulated to the Planning Committee; and
- 3) Members calling in an application must attend the relevant Planning Committee, send a Member on their behalf or provide an apology / reason for non-attendance.