

**Standards Committee : 12 January 2010**

**Title of report: Proposed adoption of a revised and updated protocol for speaking at planning committees and sub-committees**

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| <b>Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b> | <b>N/A</b>       |
| <b>Is it in the Council's Forward Plan?</b>  | <b>N/A</b>       |
| <b>Is it eligible for "call in" by Scrutiny?</b>   | <b>N/A</b>       |
| <b>Cabinet member portfolio</b>  | <b>Corporate</b> |

**Electoral wards affected: All**

**Ward Councillors affected: N/A**

**Public or private: Public**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider the attached draft Protocol for Public Speaking at Planning Committees and Sub-Committees and refer to the Planning & Highways Committee for consideration.

To recommend to Council adoption of the attached draft Public Speaking Protocol.

## **2. Key Points**

It is essential that the Council's planning committee and sub-committee meetings operate properly, lawfully and effectively and are seen by all parties involved in the process to do so. Decisions must be made fairly, openly, impartially and for justifiable planning reasons. Failure to do so not only exposes both the Council and individual councillors to potential criticism and allegations of improper conduct, but can also increase the likelihood of legal challenges being mounted through the courts or complaints being made to the Ombudsman.

The need for proper processes to be followed and for the rules of natural justice to be observed is particularly important at planning committee and sub-committee meetings which are open to the public and can be highly charged with emotion.

A public speaking protocol providing guidance for all those wishing to attend and participate in planning committee and sub-committee meetings has been in existence for a number of years. This protocol has now been revised and updated to provide clearer advice to members of the public on the procedures that will be followed and how the meetings will be conducted by the Chair. The main changes are as follows:

- Clarification of the time limits that will apply to members when attending committee meetings to make representations as ward councillor
- Clarification that PowerPoint presentations will not normally be permitted.
- Clarification that members of the public should not attempt to pass messages to any members of the committee during the meeting.
- Introduction of a deadline for receipt by the LPA of additional documents/information that members of the public may wish to rely on in support of their presentations. This is intended to prevent the last-minute circulation of information at the committee meeting.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

The Council should have appropriate protocols in place to ensure that its planning committees and its sub-committees are conducted in a fair, open and businesslike manner.

### **4. Consultees and their opinions**

Various officers in Legal Services, Planning and Building Control and the Policy and Governance Service have been involved in discussions regarding the proposed revisions to the protocol. The Chairs of both of the Area Planning Sub-Committees, the Chair of the Planning & Highways Committee and the leaders of the political groups have all been consulted. Responses to those consultations are incorporated in the attached draft protocol.

### **5. Officer recommendations and reasons**

That the Standards Committee consider the attached draft protocol and refer it to the Planning & Highways Committee for further consideration and thereafter that the draft protocol be referred to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee and then Council for formal adoption.

### **6. Cabinet portfolio holder recommendation**

N/A

### **7. Next steps**

If approved by this Committee, the draft public speaking protocol will be referred to the Planning & Highways Committee on 25 January 2010, then to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee on 5 February 2010 and then to Full Council on 24 March 2010 for formal approval.

### **8. Contact officer and relevant papers**

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Background Papers:

N/A