

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 29th January, 2013

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Committee Secretary: Simon Hill, Senior Democratic Services Officer, The Office of the Chief Executive
email:democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk Tel: 01992 564249

7.a Addition to Work Programme (Pages 3 - 6)

Agenda Item 7 - Work Programme Monitoring

(b) Reserve Programme

Please find attached a request from Councillor D Stallan for a Task and Finish Panel to be set up to review the protocol for (planning) site visits.

Also attached, for background information, is the current rules under the planning protocol as set out in our constitution.

Members are asked to consider the request and either:

- (a) **Set up a Task and Finish Panel, by appointing a chairman and members to fully consider the request and report back to this Committee;**
- (b) **Ask an existing Standing Panel to consider this request; or**
- (c) **Decide not to support the request.**

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REQUEST FOR A TASK AND FINISH PANEL – from Cllr. Stellan

I would like to formally submit a request for a Task & Finish Panel to be set up to agree a protocol for planning site visits. I have used the PICK system for this request.

I wish my name to go forward as the Councillor proposing this panel, and I have 2 supporting councillors, Councillor A Boyce and Councillor J Phillip

Summary of issue:

To set up a protocol for site visits to ensure that site visits are managed to ensure that planning application visits are done fairly and that both applicants and opponents of applications are assured that a fair decision is made.

Public Interest Justification:

No known public demand for such a protocol

Impact on social economic and environmental well being of the area:

Planning applications are not challenged on the basis that the site visit was not properly undertaken.

Council Performance in the area:

Not known

Keep in Context:

No known reviews taken place.

It is our view that this should only require 2 meetings to be held with a maximum of 3.

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Extract from the Constitution on Site Visits:

20. Site Visits

20.1 Formal site visits may be requested by any Planning Committee. However, these consume resources and could delay determination of an application. It is good practice to:

(a) consider site visits only where there is a substantial benefit to the decision-making process, e.g. when the impact of the proposed development is difficult to visualise from prior inspection from a public place, or from the plans and the supporting material; or it is particularly contentious;

(b) encourage members of the Committee, plus the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, to attend the site visit, together with a senior planning officer, if they have not already done so;

(c) ensure that the visit is managed by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or senior officer and that it is made clear to other parties at the outset that the purpose is to gather factual information first hand – **not** to hear arguments for and against, or to enter into a debate about the merits of the case;

(d) ensure that the application will not be determined at that site visit;

(e) in the interests of fairness to all parties, consider the desirability of viewing an application site from more than one property when the site visit is arranged.

20.2 Any response to questions or statements by interested parties at site visits should follow the good practice summarised above. Councillors should refrain from making comments on the merits or otherwise of the application to any interested party.

20.3 All formal site visits should be conducted in a single group.

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