

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Standing Panel Monday, 3rd July, 2006

Place: Committee Room 1

Time: 7.30 pm

Committee Secretary: Zoe Folley, Research and Democratic Services
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- 8. REVIEW OF AREA PLANS SUB - COMMITTEE STRUCTURE (Pages 3 - 6)**
(Head of Research and Democratic Services). To consider the attached report.

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Report to Constitutional and Member Services Scrutiny Standing Panel Date of Meeting: 3 July 2006

Subject: Areas Plans Sub-Committees – Review of Structure

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Recommendation:

To consider responses to the review of the structure of the Area Plans Sub – Committees

(a) Responses submitted to consultation in Members Bulletin (16 June 2006)

I am not familiar with the proposals for 3 sub-committees. I can not therefore comment on the proposals for other parts of the District but I feel I should make the point that Plans A, in my view, covers a logical geographical area and the workload is busy but acceptable. I would not want to see this changed. I did see a proposal from Fergus MacLaine which I did not find acceptable. I can not remember the detail but I think it included Waltham Abbey in Plans 'A' but not Chigwell which most of those I spoke to were against.

I believe the other sub-committees may need some re-organisation, partly because of the rural nature of parts of the District, but I am unable to comment as I have not seen the detailed proposals.

(Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding)

I would like you to note my strong support for the existing geographical groupings for the plans committees.

Councillor P Spencer (Buckhurst Hill East)

I am writing to you to express my strong support for the sub committees remaining as local. Local residents value the fact that the committee responsible for deciding planning applications affecting their area is made up of local councillors who are likely to have first hand knowledge of the sites subject to planning applications.

Councillor R Goold – (Buckhurst Hill West)

(b) Views expressed by the Local Councils Liaisons Committee on 22 June 2006 – Minute Extract

A Nazeing Parish Councillor welcomed the proposal to regroup the areas covered to separate rural and urban areas and the desire to give all Members the opportunity to serve on a Sub – Committee if that was their wish. However expressed concern at the proposal to move to a three area structure as this would speed up the turn

around time which Local Councils already struggled to keep up with. Nazeing Parish Council already held two meetings per month for planning and extraordinary meetings for significant applications. This workload was significant and it was likely that a three area solution would result in more work and further pressures on local representatives time and could effect the quality of the decisions.

A Loughton Member stated that the local nature of the structure should be retained and that other Loughton local representatives shared this view. There was widespread support in Loughton over the fact that their Sub-Committee was held in the area and changes to this would be a 'backward step'.

A Stapleford Abbots Parish Councillor questioned whether any loss of the local nature/local knowledge aspect of the Sub – Committees could increase the need for site visits? Under the area system, there was an expectation that the Memberships had knowledge of the sites under consideration as they were located in their wards which would not be so if the Area based structure was disbanded.

Local representatives requested more time to explore the various options possible at their next planning meetings and that those Councils not present be also given the chance to contribute to the discussion. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel agreed to this and asked for comments to be submitted back to Democratic Services for submission to the review.

I feel strongly that the panels should consist solely of local members. In terms of numbers that could prove to be too cumbersome, but it is important that all wards should have at least one member on the committee. Only local members have that vital local knowledge for good representation of their residents. We have to be answerable to the people who voted for us. If necessary we have District Development Control as a back up.

Councillor K Rush (Theydon Bois)

I strongly support keeping the membership of each planning committee to the councillors who represent the relevant wards covered by that committee.

Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse (Epping Hemnall)

In response to your request for our opinions of the idea that councillors could sit on any Area Committee, regardless of whether they came from the given area covered, let me say that I thought that we gave up that old fashioned idea when the Area Committees were created.

It seems to me that the best people to be aware of the problems and views of the given locality are the councillors who represent those wards. In the majority of cases the councillors come from those wards, living in them, or close by and if they don't know their own areas, who does? I, for one, shall be very angry if a councillor from another ward dared to tell my electors what he/she thought they should have built in their own neighbourhood! We have had enough trouble recently with the totally inappropriate 'Atrium' project in Albert Road. I should be very interested indeed to hear who was responsible for pushing that through the Area Committee. The Parish Council certainly did not see that particular scheme presented to it and I have yet to find which councillors passed it through Area 'A'!

Councillor M Woollard (Buckhurst Hill East)

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