

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CHAIRMEN AND
VICE CHAIRMEN
HELD ON THURSDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2009
IN TRAINING ROOM, 25 HEMNALL STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 10.15 PM**

Members Present: M Colling, Mrs A Grigg (Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder), G Pritchard, B Sandler, Mrs L Wagland and J Wyatt

Other members present: -

Apologies for Absence: A Green, Mrs P Brooks and J Hart

Officers Present J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), N Richardson (Principal Planning Officer), S Solon (Principal Planning Officer), J Shingler (Senior Planning Officer) and S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: -

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Councillor Wagland took the chair for the meeting.

2. DISCUSSION OF PLANS PRIOR TO MEETINGS

Agreed:

(1) That a pilot of pre-application briefings be on the basis of:

- member/officers only
- application where a pre-application fees has been agreed
- attendance on the basis of Chairman, Vice Chairman and a nominated group representative of the Area Plans Subcommittee concerned
- based upon a general discussion of issues and likely conditions/S106 agreements
- the agreement of the process by the monitoring officer

(2) Planning Services to consider inclusion of a link to the online plans on Area Plans agenda;

(3) Planning Services to consider providing planning website/pinpoint member training before or after Area Plans meetings.

3. IMPROVING LPI'S – INCREASE DELEGATION, FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS, ETC

Agreed:

- (1) That officers consider the application validation process to ensure that full application documentation is received before application is registered;
- (2) That officers consider how agreement with developers could be obtained to allow larger applications to be considered over a longer timescale;
- (3) That officers prepare a discussion report for the next Local Council's liaison on ideas for improving Local Council comments on planning applications and reporting processes for these comments.

4. DEFENDING REFUSALS AT APPEAL

Noted that:

Only two appeals had incurred costs awards this year and that costs application had now been extended to written representations cases.

Agreed:

- (1) Area Plans Subcommittee report template to be reviewed to ensure that information is presented in the best way taking account of best practice in other authorities and how many residents have been consulted;
- (2) That if an application is refused by members contrary to officer recommendation that members views form part of any appeal statement.

5. DECISION MAKING AT MEETINGS - WEBCASTING

Agreed:

- (1) That Chairmen must ensure that they obtain clear reasons for refusal before any vote is taken;
- (2) That in such cases members be asked to put their reasons in terms of types of planning based objections rather than quoting specific policies of the local plan;
- (3) That members be reminded of the need to ensure that they are not seen to have fettered themselves by prejudging applications either at meetings or before e.g. coming to the meeting with prepared statements on applications;
- (4) That, as good practice, Chairmen ensure that they give a summary of the decision of the Subcommittee at the end of each item for the benefit of the public present and those watching from home. Summary to include result of voting and the decision made.

6. HIGHWAYS OBJECTIONS TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Noted that responses from Highways did not always have a decision with an explanation. Noted that Highways would attend Subcommittees if requested.

Agreed:

(1) If members or local councils raise highways issues as part of the consultation process, further information from highways be sought.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Chamber Improvements

Proposed improvements to the screens and microphone system noted. It was considered that the Council should not pursue an electronic voting system as part of the procurement.

(b) Next Meeting

Agreed that meetings be held twice a year – next meeting July 2009.