

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CHAIRMEN AND
VICE CHAIRMEN
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2014
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.05 - 8.40 PM**

Members Present: B Sandler (Chairman DDCC), P Keska (Vice Chairman, Area Plans Sub East), A Mitchell MBE (Vice Chairman, Area Plans West), B Rolfe (Vice Chairman, DDCC) and J Philip (PH Governance & Development Management)

Other members present: -

Apologies for Absence: G Chambers, J Hart, Mrs S Jones and Ms Y Knight

Officers Present N Richardson (Assistant Director (Development Management)), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), S Solon (Principal Planning Officer), J Godden (Planning Officer) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: -

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Resolved:

(1) That Councillor B Sandler be elected Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

2. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

(1) That the notes of the last meeting, held on 25 February 2013, be agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MEETINGS OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEES

The Meeting noted that the Guidance for Members at Planning Site Visits had been adopted.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR DDCC AND AREA PLANS SUBCOMMITTEES AND PROCEDURES FOR SPEAKING AT MEETINGS

DDCC Terms of Reference

S Hill presented the new draft Article for the District Development Control Committee (DDCC), as attached to the agenda. It was highlighted that the new draft Article was

a balancing act and should not become dated by new legislation. It was suggested that the new Article should be implemented in May 2015.

N Richardson informed the Meeting that the Direction to which paragraph 1(f) under DDCC referred to no longer existed. It was proposed that this paragraph should be removed and the following sub-section added to the section concerning Area Plans Sub-Committees:

“4 (i) (c) it is required to be referred to the Secretary of State as set out in any current Government Circular or Directive; or”

It was emphasised that such applications would come to DDCC for consideration as well. N Richardson also outlined the five circumstances whereby an application would be referred to the Secretary of State for approval.

Cllr Philip commented that it was sensible for the majority of planning applications to be considered by the Area Sub-Committees. He also suggested that the new Article should be piloted for 1 year after its introduction, in order to measure the impact of the changes on the workload of DDCC.

Public Participation Rules

S Hill informed the Meeting that the Rules for Participation on Planning Matters had also been revised, and the proposed additions had been highlighted in yellow in the draft Article. It was noted that Statutory Consultees had been included at paragraph 1 (c), and it was felt that the words *“...where they have so requested.”* should be added to this paragraph. In paragraph 1 (e), it was also felt that references to the opinion/recommendation of the Head of Planning & Economic Development should be removed.

The Meeting considered paragraph (3) and Cllr Sandler thought that it should be at the discretion of the Chairman to make a judgement as to whether to allow more than three speakers for a particular item. It was agreed that the following additional sentence should be added to that paragraph: *“In the light of exceptional circumstances, the Chairman can permit more than three speakers for a particular item.”* For paragraph (4), it was agreed that the current arrangements should be retained, whereby public speakers were required to register by 4.00pm on the day before the meeting, with the Chairman having the discretion to allow further speakers after this time.

The Meeting was unanimous in its support of paragraph (6), whereby written submissions and photographs would not be considered if brought to the attention of the (Sub-)Committee for the first time at the meeting, and it was felt that this should be included in the “Your Voice, Your Choice” leaflet if it was not already. The Meeting also agreed that photographs submitted by Public Speakers should not be included in the Planning Officer’s presentation.

Cllr Sandler felt that public speakers should be encouraged to be concise in their submissions to Members, and also state clearly whether they were for or against the application under consideration. Officers undertook to add suitable wording to the “Your Voice, Your Choice” leaflet to make this clear. With regard to paragraphs (7) and (8), which concerned the right to speak again if an application was referred to DDCC, or deferred for any reason to a future meeting, it was proposed these paragraphs should be amalgamated in the new draft Article.

Other Matters

Cllr Sandler raised concerns about inexperienced Members being appointed to DDCC, as occasionally this did not show the Committee in the best possible light, and enquired whether training should be compulsory for Members.

S Hill highlighted that there were precedents in other areas such as Licensing and the Audit & Governance Committee, where inexperienced Members were not expected to be appointed to serve. N Richardson did highlight that almost all of the new Members elected in May 2014 had attended the Planning Protocol training.

It was agreed that a new paragraph (5) should be added under the Membership heading for the new draft Article whereby Members of DDCC were expected to have a certain amount of experience and aptitude in planning matters (in a similar fashion to the Audit & Governance Committee), and were expected to have attended all relevant Planning training courses.

S Hill thanked the Members present for their deliberations and informed the Meeting that their comments would be incorporated in the consideration of this item at the next meeting of the Planning Services Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved:

(1) That paragraph 1(f) under the draft Terms of Reference for DDCC be removed as the Direction to which this paragraph referred no longer existed;

(2) That an additional paragraph 4 (i) (c) be added to the draft Terms of Reference for Area Plans Sub-Committees, stating:

“it is required to be referred to the Secretary of State as set out in any current Government circular or Directive; or”;

(3) That the draft Article for DDCC be implemented in May 2015, and be reviewed after 1 year to determine its impact;

(4) That the words “...where they have so requested.” be added to the end of paragraph 1 (c) in the Rules for Participation on Planning Matters;

(5) That references to the opinion or recommendation of the Head of Planning & Economic Development be removed from paragraph 1 (e) in the Rules for Participation on Planning Matters;

(6) That a further sentence be added to paragraph (3) in the Rules for Participation on Planning Matters, stating:

“In the light of exceptional circumstances, the Chairman can permit more than three speakers for a particular item.”

(7) That the current arrangements for public speakers to register by 4.00pm on the day before the meeting be retained, with the Chairman having the discretion to permit additional speakers after this time;

(8) That additional written submissions and/or photographs not be considered by Members unless received in advance of the meeting, and wording to this effect be included in the “Your Voice, Your Choice” leaflet;

(9) That photographs submitted by the public should not be included in the Planning Officer's presentation;

(10) That the need for public speakers to be concise in their submissions to Members, and to clearly state whether they were for or against the application, be included in the "Your Voice, Your Choice" leaflet;

(11) That paragraphs (7) & (8) in the Rules for Participation on Planning Matters, concerning the right to speak again if an application was referred to DDCC or deferred for any reason to a future meeting, be amalgamated; and

(12) That a new paragraph (5) be added under the Membership heading for the new draft Article whereby Members of DDCC were expected to have a certain amount of experience and aptitude in planning matters (similar to the Audit & Governance Committee), and have attended all recent and relevant planning training courses.

5. OPERATION OF MINORITY REFERENCES AT PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEES

The Group considered the operation of minority references at Planning Sub-Committee meetings. S Hill advised that this item would be considered by the Constitution & Member Services Scrutiny Panel and this was not a procedure operated by many other Councils.

Cllr Keska stated that minority references to the District Development Control Committee (DDCC) had been made by Plans East for policy reasons. Cllr Sandler opined that the current rules should remain in operation with at least four Members required to agree a Minority Reference to DDCC.

Resolved:

(1) That the rules concerning a Minority Reference from a Plans Sub-Committee to DDCC remain unchanged with at least four Members required to agree the Reference.

6. AREA SOUTH - POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE LOCATION IN LOUGHTON

S Hill reported that Epping Forest College had been examined as a possible location for the forthcoming Parliamentary Election Count in 2015. During these discussions, the College had indicated that they were keen to extend their facilities to the local community, and would be delighted to host Plans South meetings in their theatre. The public would be situated in banked seating, which would make for easier viewing, but the cost of hire would be more expensive than the current venue at Roding Valley High School.

Cllr Sandler commented that if Plans South was to move from its current location then it should be brought back to the Civic Offices as there would be no hire charge for the use of the Council Chamber, and it would be easier for Officers to support the meeting. In addition, the webcasting of the meeting could be streamed live to the public and it would require less Officers to manage the meeting. Any move for Plans South should save the Council money, not spend more.

Cllr Philip suggested that costings should be provided for holding Plans South meetings at Roding Valley High School, Epping Forest College and the Civic Offices,

as this would be the best way to consider any potential move, along with the advantages.

S Hill agreed to prepare a report for the Portfolio Holder to discuss with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Plans South.

Resolved:

(1) That a report be prepared for the Governance & Development Management Portfolio Holder to discuss with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Plans South on the costs and benefits of holding Plans South at the following venues:

- (a) Roding Valley High School;
- (b) Epping Forest College; and
- (c) The Civic Offices in Epping.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Meeting noted that there was no other urgent business to consider.