

Committee: Planning Applications Committee

Date: 16 March 2017

Wards: All

Subject: Change in Procedure for Public Speaking at PAC and changes to Agenda

Lead officer: Neil Milligan – Development Control Manager

Lead member: Linda Kirby – Chair of Planning Applications Committee

Contact officer: Lisa Jewell – Democratic Services Officer

Recommendations:

- A. For PAC members to note and comment on the proposed changes to the Public Speaking Procedure and standard agenda items
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To inform PAC members of changes to the Public Speaking Procedure, and changes to standard items in the Agenda.
- 1.2. It is considered good practice to allow Public Speaking at Planning Committee Meetings. The proposal in this report seeks to standardise the public speaking procedure so that it is more proportionate.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. All written representations received from the statutory consultation on each planning application are available to read on the Council's website via Planning Explorer, and are summarised by the Planning Officers within their report. Members of the public, who have written letters of representation, are then invited to speak.
- 2.2. Merton PAC currently allows three objectors, each speaking for three minutes, per application brought to Committee. Applicants/agents are then given an amount of time equivalent to the total speaking time of the objectors.
- 2.3. The current procedure does say that the maximum of three speakers is at the Chairs discretion, and can be reduced if the meeting is busy. But as speakers are registered in advance it is difficult to withdraw the opportunity to speak at the start of a meeting, and this is not something that is done at even the busiest meetings.
- 2.4. The new procedure, as proposed, is that objectors have a maximum of 6 minutes of speaking time:
- 1 objector gets 3 minutes
 - 2 objectors get 3 minutes each
 - If more than two objectors want to speak then a maximum of 6 minutes will be available and they will be encouraged to make their

own arrangements to share the time out between them or appoint others to speak for them

- The applicant will still get the same amount of time as objectors, ie 3 or 6 minutes.

- 2.5. More speakers can be allowed, at the Chair's discretion but only for very large/complex/important developments. In these cases the Head of Development Control will flag this up in advance of Agenda Publication
- 2.6. The proposal in this report will still allow public speaking times that are more generous or equivalent to those allowed at the Planning Committees of neighbouring authorities.
- 2.7. A new, shorter procedure note will appear on the Agenda, this will cover registration to speak, speaking by councillors who are not PAC members, submission of late information and contact details
- 2.8. A legal view was sought on the information provided in Item 4 and the conclusion was that, whilst this is useful background information, it no longer needs to be provided on the Agenda. Item 4 will be removed from the Agenda, and a small amount of the current information will be provided on the agenda front sheet.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Make no changes

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. N/A

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The proposed changes are to be implemented on the May agenda

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. N/A

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Public speaking at PAC meetings is considered good practice, but it is not a legal requirement

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. N/A

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. N/A

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. N/A

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- 11.1. None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Planning Officers Society Practice Guidance Note – 'Public Speaking in Planning Committees 2007'

<http://www.planningofficers.org.uk/downloads/pdf/Guidanceonpublicspeakingatcommittee.pdf>