

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE CABINET**

**7TH MARCH 2007**

**PLANNING WORKING GROUP - REVIEW OF PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Environment Services Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**1. SUMMARY**

1.1 Public speaking was introduced on a trial basis at the September 2006 meeting of the Planning Committee. At its Meeting just before Planning Committee on Monday, 5th February 2007, the Planning Working Group reviewed the implementation of public speaking at the Committee, and received feedback from Members, officers and the public.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 The recommendations of the Working Group to the Executive Cabinet are:

- (i) that Meetings of the Planning Committee continue to commence at 2.00 p.m.;
- (ii) that the approach taken by other local authorities in notifying interested parties of the opportunity to speak at the Committee meetings be investigated, and incorporated into the Council's relevant processes as a benchmark of standard (or best) practice; and
- (iii) that the public speaking facility be continued, and reviewed again in twelve months time.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Public speaking at Planning Committee Meetings was introduced, on a four month trial basis, in September 2006. The meeting of the Planning Working Group was arranged so as to review the implementation of public speaking, receive feedback from Members, officers and the public, and to review how meetings of the Planning Committee have been conducted during the trial period.

3.2 "Customer Feedback Forms" have been made available at all meetings of the Planning Committee in an attempt to obtain the comments, views and observations of those members of the public who are able to address the

Committee. Furthermore, prior to the meeting of the Working Group, a random sample of persons who had spoken at Committee were contacted to seek any further views they may have wished to express.

- 3.3 The Working Group felt that since the trial period had begun at the September 2006 meeting, the public speaking facility had gone well, with few problems. Feedback from members of the public, although limited to informal (verbal) responses - as opposed to completion of the "Customer Feedback Forms" - had also been largely positive.
- 3.4 The main difficulty which had been encountered during the trial period had occurred with high profile, sensitive and / or controversial applications, which may involve, for example, large-scale developments, or telecommunications notifications. The Head of Planning and Environment Services reported that, in some instances, he had notified over one hundred respondents making representations about a single application of the opportunity to speak at Planning Committee. He added that, in such instances, this caused a disproportionate amount of extra work when, eventually, only one person would be permitted to speak to the Committee. It was suggested that the approach taken by other local authorities be investigated, and incorporated into the Council's relevant processes.
- 3.5 Members also considered whether meetings of the Planning Committee should start at a later time but it was generally felt that 2.00 p.m. was acceptable.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 It is anticipated that there are no adverse financial implications as a result of the above recommendations.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from any matters referred to in this report.

#### **6. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 To be an efficient and effective Council.

#### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 There are no risks associated with the matters referred to in this report.

#### **8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Public speaking at Meetings of the Planning Committee enable our customers to have an active role in the decision making process.

## 9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues <b>None</b>
Personnel Implications <b>None</b>
Governance/Performance Management <b>None</b>
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 <b>None</b>
Policy <b>None</b>
Environmental <b>None</b>
Equalities and Diversity <b>None</b>

## 10. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	<b>Yes</b>
Acting Chief Executive	<b>No</b>
Corporate Director (Services)	<b>No</b>
Assistant Chief Executive	<b>No</b>
Head of Legal and Democratic Services	<b>Yes</b>
Head of Financial Services	<b>No</b>
Head of Organisational Development & HR	<b>No</b>
Corporate Procurement Team	<b>No</b>

## 12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- (1) Completed Customer Feedback Form
- (2) Schedule of persons registered to speak at Planning Committee (Sept. 2006 - Feb. 2007)

## CONTACT OFFICER

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