

**Development Control Committee  
23 August 2005**

Report by Development Control Services Manager

**Membership arrangements for Planning Panel and Committee Site Visits**

Members will recall that I recently gave a verbal report regarding the current arrangements for membership of both the Planning Panel and committee site visits. The current arrangement for both these bodies is as follows:

- ◆ Planning Panel - Chairman, Vice Chairman and five other members of the committee
- ◆ Site visits - Chairman, Vice Chairman and six other members of the committee

These arrangements have now been running for some time and on the whole have been successful and well attended by those members involved. However, these bodies were set up when the committee membership totalled 27 in the case of the site visitors and 21 in the case of the Planning Panel. As you will all know the Development Control Committee now consists of only 17 committee members. The net result of the reduction in the membership of the committee is that the two 'sub-committees' now represent nearly half (41% and 47% respectively) of the total membership of main committee. This effectively means that each member of the committee is involved in every other group of site inspections and is committed to around six months a year to the Planning Panel. In some cases this is proving to be a commitment that is particularly difficult to honour.

The current arrangement for both sub-committees is based on a rotational arrangement for membership. The Planning Panel rotates on a 3 monthly basis and site visits on a 3 weekly basis. The Chairman and I have been discussing options on how to continue with both arrangements, which incidentally are vital in the efficient determination of planning applications, without unnecessary burden on each member of the committee. On this basis the following options are put forward as possible alternatives to the current situation:

1. The panel and site visit arrangements could continue to operate as at present.
2. For Panel, continue with the current rotation but extend the period of membership to 4 or 6 months.
3. As 2 above but with only 4 members (plus the Chairman and Vice Chairman) which would reduce numbers to match reduction in committee membership.
4. Reduce the membership on site visits to 4 (plus the Chairman and Vice Chairman) in line with reduction in committee membership but continue with the current rotational arrangements.
5. The Panel could be made up of 4 (plus the Chairman and Vice Chairman) members for a year.
6. Committee vote 4 members to the Panel and provide a fixed membership until the end of the current Council (April 2007).

Whilst I am not necessarily proposing any one of the above solutions I do feel that the size of these two bodies should reflect the size of the overall committee and represent approximately a third of the total membership (as it did when first set up). Members must realise the commitment required for the Panel, which so far since its instigation has only missed 1 week other than at Christmas/other public holidays. Members may wish not to be considered for the Panel if such a commitment cannot be maintained.

**Recommendation**

Members are asked to consider the above proposals with a view to amending the existing arrangements for the composition of both the Planning Panel and member site visits.

**Richard Edwards**  
**Development Control Services Manager**

<b>RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OF THIS REPORT</b>			
	<b>SIGNIFICANT</b>	<b>MINOR</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>STATUTORY POWERS</b>	*		
<b>COUNCIL STRATEGIES</b>	*		
<b>COUNCIL POLICIES</b>	*		
<b>T &amp; C PLANNING</b>	*		
<b>BEST VALUE</b>	*		
<b>HUMAN RIGHTS</b>	*		