

REPORT TO CONSTITUTION AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF: SERVICE MANAGER - DEMOCRACY

REPORT NO.: DLS087

DATE: 13TH DECEMBER 2006

TITLE:	DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	N/A
DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN:	N/A
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	N/A

COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	N/A	
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	N/A	
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	N/A	
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	N/A	
INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Carried out and appended to report? Not Applicable	Full impact assessment required? No
BACKGROUND PAPERS:		

1. INTRODUCTION

Planning consultants, and others, have recently observed a series of Development Committee meetings. Some concern has been voiced at methods of operation in relation to site inspections, member expression of material planning considerations when speaking, and procedures at meetings of the committee.

The purpose of this report is to suggest methods by which the administration of and public confidence in the committee's decisions could be improved.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That site visits be allowed on request by any member for a particular ward in which an application is situated subject to:

- The criteria set out in the Code of Guidance for Probity in Planning being met;
- Requests being made by no later than 12 noon on the Friday prior to a meeting;
- Urgent requests at committee only being allowed on a unanimous vote by the Committee.

2. Members should be required to make it clear, when addressing the Committee, whether the points they are making are material planning considerations or not.

3. That committee members be required to sit in the first two rows of the Council Chamber when attending meetings of the Development Control Committee.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

There is clear guidance in the Probity in Planning booklet about the procedure surrounding site visits. Concern has however been expressed by Planning Consultants and applicants that proper reasons are not always given. It is important that requests are made for sound planning reasons, and even more importantly for reasons which cannot be evidenced by reading the circulated report and closely scrutinising the photographs of the site shown at the meeting.

Ideally, all comments made at meetings should address material planning considerations. However, it is often the case that members make points which, whilst they may be relevant to some aspect surrounding the application are not strictly material planning considerations. All that would be required to make this clear to other members, officers and members of the public is for the member speaking to clarify whether he/she is making material or non-material points.

Finally, it has been suggested that all members, when meeting in the Chamber, sit in the first two rows. There are two reasons for this – firstly to give the increasingly large numbers of visitors the opportunity to be seated by using the rear row of the room. In addition, it would make it easier for the Chairman and officers to control the meeting, as members would be grouped together rather than spread, as now, over the entire room. Lastly, public speaking will in future be carried out from one of the side desks to allow the speaker to face the meeting rather than speak from behind, as is the case now.

4. COMMENTS OF SECTION 151 OFFICER

No financial comments.

5. COMMENTS OF MONITORING OFFICER

Comments will be available at the meeting.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

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