

Planning Advisory Panel

Report of the Planning Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

That the approach set out in paragraph 5.3.1 to paragraph 5.3.5 of the report regarding the arrangement and membership of the Planning Advisory Panel be agreed

SUMMARY:

- To review the arrangements and membership of the Planning Advisory Panel

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Members play a valuable role in the formulation and review of planning policy. The Council's informal member's panel, the Planning Advisory Panel, provides the forum for members to be briefed and views to be raised.
- 1.2 The Planning Advisory Panel was last reviewed in 2016 the outcome of which was agreed by Cabinet. There is now an opportunity to revisit that review and update the arrangements and membership of the panel.

2 Background

- 2.1 Planning policy documents establish the planning framework for the Borough. The Head of Planning Policy is responsible for advising the Council and Portfolio Holder on planning policy issues at a national, sub regional and local level. There is also the responsibility for taking planning documents through the necessary processes and monitoring their application.
- 2.2 These documents, whether it is the Development Plan Document or Supplementary Planning Documents, are approved and adopted at meetings of the Council. This provides the forum for all Members to formally debate the content of planning policy documents.
- 2.3 As a mechanism for greater Member involvement in the planning policy process an informal Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) was established. These meetings provided opportunity for Members to be briefed on planning policy and for them to raise any issues they may have. The PAP is not a decision making body.
- 2.4 The PAP is long established however the function and role of councillors in the PAP was considered as part of the OSCOM review into member involvement in the preparation of planning policy. This review reported to Cabinet on 1 June 2016 and its recommendations were approved. A subsequent OSCOM review was reported to Cabinet on 2 November 2016 and was noted.

- 2.5 The 1 June approval triggered a number of differences in how the previous PAP was organised. This included agreeing the standing membership and the process for all members to be involved. As part of the 1 June report it was identified that the amended process would be reviewed once there had been opportunity for those recommendations to be put in place. Since that time officers have been able to review the recommendations effectiveness and which allows for the current arrangements to be updated.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 Improving the way in which the Council develops and implements its planning policies will help, either directly or indirectly, deliver the corporate objectives.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 Ensuring that Councillors are briefed on the strategic planning process for the Borough is key. The recommendations proposed aim to improve that ongoing involvement with all Members.

5 Options

- 5.1 There remains value in having a forum in which Councillors can be involved in the preparation of planning policy documents. Their experience can, albeit on an informal basis, help inform possible future reviews of policy in combination with other material factors e.g. case law, national guidance etc.

- 5.2 Given the early stage of the Local Plan there now is an opportune time to review and update PAP. As changes are recommended it is necessary to do this via Cabinet given the previous approval process.

- 5.3 Having reviewed the current approach a number of proposals are recommended:-

- 5.3.1 The 1 June 2016 Cabinet report listed those portfolio titles and committee chairman which would comprise the standing membership. Since that time changes have been made to both the portfolios and committee structure meaning the composition is out of date. It is recommended that PAP would continue to have a standing membership of 16 Councillors. PAP is not an ordinary committee of the Council so rules of proportionality do not apply. However it is suggested that the standing membership is informally politically proportionate with each group putting forward members. It is proposed that Cabinet members with a portfolio that has links to land use planning would form part of that standing membership;

- 5.3.2 That the frequency of the meetings changes from one per month to once every two months with additional sessions factored in as required e.g. at key milestones of the local plan;

- 5.3.3 All members would have the opportunity to attend PAP and would be notified of meetings via the Members Information Bulletin;

- 5.3.4 Papers would be circulated electronically, unless the nature of the item requires hard copies to be produced; and

- 5.3.5 That the Planning portfolio holder continues to chair PAP with other portfolio holders being requested to vice chair in the Planning portfolio holders absence.
- 5.4 To supplement PAP member workshops/ briefing sessions will continue to be had to help provide a greater understanding of policy issues and opportunity for better engagement with officers. For example in the drafting of the Issues & Options document all member workshops were held. This allowed members to highlight particular concerns

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 The recommendations are relatively minor and are intended to help continue Member involvement in planning policy as well as reflecting an update to the administration of the PAP. There would be no benefit in continuing with the existing arrangements and would not reflect the current situation with regards to membership.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 This report is for information purposes so the Council's Risk management process does not need to be applied.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 The resources required to facilitate the Planning Advisory Panel can be met via existing budget. There is a benefit in only providing electronic copies of any papers.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The proposed continued use of a panel to assist the Head of Planning Policy and Transport in the preparation of policy documents does not raise any legal issues provided that it acts in a purely advisory capacity and is not a decision making body.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 An EQIA screening had been completed in accordance with the Council's EQIA methodology and no potential for unlawful discrimination or negative impact has been identified, therefore a full EQIA has not been carried out.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 Community Safety - none
- 11.2 Environmental Health Issues - none
- 11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate - none
- 11.4 Property Issues - none

11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – all

12 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

12.1 Members have an important role to play in the process of preparing, approving and implementing the Council's planning policies. The proposed recommendations outlined in section 5 allow for the current arrangements to the Planning Advisory Panel to be updated.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	0	File Ref:	Pp2-2
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