

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 7 NOVEMBER 2018

**AGENDA ITEM 3 – PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – ORDER IN WHICH THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL WILL INVITE QUESTIONS BELOW RECEIVED
IN WRITING IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING**

1. From Mr Chester to the Cabinet Member for Planning - Councillor Charles

**THE FULL DETAIL OF THE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IS DETAILED
BELOW**

NOTE: The Chairman will:

- invite questions from members of the public who have submitted in writing their questions in line with the Council's Constitution;
- explain that the questions received will be answered by the appropriate Members of the Cabinet or the Chairman of the Overview Select Committee
- confirm that Public Question Time allows Members of the public to ask one question at a time and that a maximum of one minute is allowed for each question.
- state that questions will be invited in the order in which they have been received and that if there is time remaining from the 15 minutes allowed for Public Question Time, questioners will be allowed to ask a supplementary question.

QUESTION ONE

From Mr Chester to the Cabinet Member for Planning - Councillor Charles

Question

Many of us who have an interest in planning matters have been increasingly concerned about the bizarre conduct of a number of recent meetings of the Development Control Committee. Not only does this leave the Council open to challenge but it is also confusing and frustrating for members of the public. Will the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Charles, please therefore consider some suggestions to improve the situation – will he consider my suggestions below?

(1) Where an application which has attracted significant public interest is being considered the meeting should be webcast. A Planning Forum should be held in advance of the Development Control meeting on such large applications at which members of the public can question the promoters and Council officers and make verbal representations which can be minuted and presented to the decision making meeting. Ideally such a forum should take place in the locality of the application site. Any Councillors that attend that Forum who are members of the Development Control Committee will observe only.

(2) Where a member of the Committee seeks to move to refuse an application contrary to the recommendation of officers, that is to be moved as an amendment to the recommendation if moved, or as a main recommendation if the officer recommendation has not been moved. The proposal should contain the reasons for the refusal and planning officers will help to frame such a motion even if contrary to their own recommendation, and such advice should be available in advance of the meeting. That does not prevent officers from justifying their own recommendation and pointing out any weaknesses in the refusal reasons before a vote is taken. Where a member of the Committee seeks to approve an application contrary to the advice of planning officers such a move will again contain the reason for doing so, and the decision shall be deferred until such time as all the necessary conditions are available in writing for review.

(3) All votes of the Development Control Committee shall be recorded votes.

(4) The secretariat to the Committee shall sit at the front of meeting, able to observe the whole chamber and advise the Chair, rather than acting as a stopwatch for public speakers at the side of the room. Another member of staff shall perform that function.

(5) All agendas of the Committee shall carry an explanation of what the Committee's function is, how legislation requires the Committee to carry out its role and what the Committee is and is not allowed to take into consideration.

Response

Thank you for your question Mr Chester.

I have read, at length, the suggestions you have put forward but need to outline that Development Control Committee meetings are controlled by adhering to the Planning Code of Conduct – this subsequently confirms how meetings are operated.

Supplementary Question

The questioner stated that from the response just received he took it that the Cabinet Member would not be taking his suggestions on board for review. He then made reference to the Council's webcasting equipment which had been a costly investment for the Council and had been rarely used since installation. He stated that it was unfortunate that the Special Meeting of the Development Control Committee had not been webcast live on 24 October 2018 due to a technical fault and as the equipment was still with the manufacturer. He therefore asked if it could be confirmed if the Reconvened Special Meeting of the Development Control Committee scheduled for 13 November 2018 would be webcast as well as future meetings of this Committee, especially when there was significant interest from the public.

Supplementary Response

I can confirm that webcasting unit had been removed from the Council Chamber so that it could receive a significant software upgrade and yes, this has taken longer than scheduled.

The Reconvened Special Development Control Committee to be held on 13 November 2018 will be webcast and I confirm that all future meetings of this Committee will be too.