

SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

18th August 2004 at 4.00 p.m.

Present : Councillors Mrs Goad (Chairman), Parris (Vice-Chairman), Brookman, Mrs Brown, Dyball, Mrs Hall, Haymes, Mrs Hazlehurst, Hill, Mrs Maconachie, Mrs Olliver, Scutt and Mrs Stainton.

Councillors Mrs Coleman and Wilde (part) were also in attendance at the meeting.

326. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Biss and Butler.

327. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

328. PLANNING PROCEDURES AND DELEGATION

The Committee received a comprehensive presentation from the Head of Planning Services which summarised how and why the planning applications being submitted to the Council were showing a continuing upward trend. Officers were now dealing with an average of over 2,000 per annum and the Committee itself was considering around 25 to 30 applications per month. These items on the agenda were in the main included due to the objections being received, i.e. either by 5 members of the public or more and/or one objection from the Town or Parish Council.

The Committee was advised that under Government legislation the Planning Service was required to meet statutory Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) targets. These were currently being achieved with regard to Minor Applications and Other Applications but were not being met in respect of Major Applications and Appeals. Members were reminded that achievement levels for meeting the targets affected the amount of Planning Service Delivery Grant that was allocated and so every effort must be made to ensure that all the targets were met.

Tree applications did regularly appear on the agendas but these were not included on the BVPI performance tables. However, as Members had often expressed their concerns regarding works to trees they were asked

whether consideration should be given to forming a Sub-Committee to deal with trees and other non-BVPI items.

The Head of Planning Services was thanked for a precise and illuminating presentation and Members then participated in discussion on the matters raised.

A motion was proposed and seconded that the status quo should be maintained at the present time but that detailed consideration should be given to changing meetings of the Committee from a four week cycle to a three week cycle as from the next municipal year.

Concerns were raised that attendance at the Planning Briefing Panel meetings had fallen to an all time low and, as this was a forum for Members to raise issues and questions on any particular application, an opportunity was being lost whereby an application might not meet the performance targets due to it being deferred at Committee through lack of information, etc.

An alternative suggestion was then proposed, and seconded, that (i) the Committee cycle should remain at 4 weekly intervals; (ii) a Non-BVPI/Trees Sub-Committee should be formed; and (iii) a letter should be sent to all Members of the Council reiterating the importance of the Planning Briefing Panel.

On advice from the Planning Solicitor that the second proposal was sufficiently different from the first so as to not constitute an amendment, the Chairman then called for the Committee to vote on whether the status quo should be maintained. On the motion being put to the vote it was declared LOST.

Prior to consideration of the second motion, the Planning Solicitor gave advice that, if it was so minded, the Committee could agree to establish a Sub-Committee in principle, with the details to be determined at a later date and subject to advice from the Solicitor to the Council. A further report on this issue would then be brought to a future meeting.

The Committee then turned to the second proposal and on it being put to the vote it was declared CARRIED. The Committee therefore

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Committee cycle to remain at 4 weekly intervals;
- (2) it be agreed in principle that a Non-BVPI/Trees Sub-Committee be set up as soon as practically possible; and

(3) a letter be sent to all Members of the Council regarding the importance of the Planning Briefing Panel.

329. RECENT OVERTURNS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the number of overturns by the Committee of applications that had been recommended for approval by officers, the Head of Planning Services now presented an information report to the Committee which detailed proposals to ensure that a more stringent process would be adhered to when considering planning applications in the future.

As car parking for residential development in urban areas, particularly town centres, was a particular concern for Members it was envisaged that applicants would now be requested to provide a Transport Assessment. In addition, in respect of design, steps would be put in place to ensure that a much higher standard of application drawings and illustrations would be expected from applicants.

The Chairman commended the report to the Committee and the Head of Planning Services welcomed Members' support for the approach he proposed to take.

(The meeting concluded at 5.40 pm)