

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE	15 JUNE 2017	9
PUBLIC SPEAKING: PLANNING COMMITTEE			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

The committee is asked to consider making changes to the procedures for public speaking at Planning Committee. The changes include limiting the number of public speakers for each application, allowing speakers to speak again when an application has been deferred, and expecting town and parish councils to be represented at Planning Committee meetings where they have requested that an application be considered by members instead of under delegated powers

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Agree to the changes in procedure for Planning Committee set out in the report under the heading 'Proposals for Change'.
2. Incorporate the public speaking procedures for Planning Committee in the constitution.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	✓
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	✓
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	

REPORT

BACKGROUND

1. At the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee in January 2017 it was determined to review the arrangements for public speaking at meetings of the Council and its committees. This recommendation was put forward by INLOGOV following their review of governance arrangements within the council. This report considers public speaking arrangements at Planning Committee. A separate report deals with public speaking at other committees.

PRESENT PUBLIC SPEAKING ARRANGEMENTS

2. Present arrangements for public speaking at Planning Committee are not contained in the constitution. Instead, they are set out in a leaflet available via the [council's website](#) and at council offices.
3. In summary, any member of the public is allowed to speak on any planning application on the agenda of Planning Committee. The applicant (or their agent) is also allowed to speak on an application, but only if there are also public speakers who oppose the application, or if the application has been recommended for refusal by planning officers. Each individual member of the public is limited to speaking for three minutes. The same time limit applies to an applicant or agent. There is no limit on the number of speakers who can speak on an application, provided they have registered in time before the meeting.
4. If, after public speakers have spoken, an application is deferred to another committee meeting, public speakers are not normally allowed to speak again.
5. Ward councillors are not public speakers, but can conveniently be dealt with in this report. Councillors who are not members of the committee, but who represent the ward where a proposed development would be located, can speak on an application without a time limit¹.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

6. Public speaking allows local communities to be directly involved in the decision-making process. It assists committee members by giving them insight into the views of those most directly involved by the applications they are considering.
7. Meetings of the Planning Committee at Fylde Council last for up to seven hours, including a break for lunch. No other local planning authority in Lancashire has planning committee meetings that approach this length. The excessive length of Planning Committee meetings imposes unreasonable demands on members and officers and runs the risk that decisions made at the end of meetings might be less well considered and of lower quality.
8. Unlimited public speaking can add considerably to the length of committee meetings. Allowing time for speakers to be seated and introduced, each public speaker adds about five minutes to the duration of a meeting. An application that attracts ten public speakers, together with the applicant or agent, will add nearly an hour to the length of the meeting.
9. It is very rare that more than a handful of public speakers have unique insights on an application. More often, a number of public speakers will share the same concerns and objections. Members of the Planning Committee can understand and weigh points made by public speakers and the strength of local feeling without needing to hear from each affected person.
10. Limiting the numbers of public speakers on any application would contribute to the shortening of meetings without materially affecting the information available to members on which to base their decisions.
11. Occasionally, an application which would otherwise be delegated to officers appears on the committee agenda at the request of a town or parish council, but no town or parish council representative attends committee. It would save committee time to have a protocol to deal swiftly with applications when this situation arises.

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

12. The chairman and vice-chairmen of the Planning Committee have met with planning and governance officers to discuss ways of shortening Planning Committee meetings. The following proposals for change were agreed to be put forward for consideration by the Audit and Standards Committee.

Public speaking:

- Include the rules for public speaking in the constitution
- Limit public speakers to five for each application (not including the applicant or agent, but including any parish or town council representative). If more than five people want to speak,

¹ Unless the member has an interest in the application: See the [information note](#) on the Code of Conduct presented to the Planning Committee on 8 February 2017.

the first five to register will be invited to speak. Speakers are to be encouraged to appoint a spokesperson or ask their ward councillor(s) to represent them.

- Where an application which has been deferred returns to the committee, public speakers who have previously spoken on the application will be allowed to speak again.

Ward councillors

- A councillor who is not a member of the committee may speak for up to five minutes on a planning application affecting their ward. They will not count as a public speaker but will need to register.

Town and parish councils

- Where a Town or Parish Council has requested that an application that would otherwise have been decided under delegated authority be referred to the committee instead, the town or parish council should send a representative as a public speaker. If the Town/Parish Council is not represented, the Chairman will normally move the item, without debate, for the vote to be taken in line with the officers' recommendation.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	No implications
Legal	There is no legal requirement to allow public speaking in Planning Committee
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Notes of meeting with chairman and vice-chairman	28 February 2017	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Public speaking leaflet		Town Hall, Lytham St Annes and https://fylde.cmis.uk.com/fylde/DocumentsandInformation.aspx