

REPORT TO:	Development Control Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 5
DATE OF MEETING:	20th January 2009	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	Head of Planning Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Gill Hague 595742	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Public Speaking at Development Control Committee	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: DC01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members recommend to the Environmental and Development Services Committee that public speaking at Development Control Committee be implemented on a permanent basis; and
- 1.2 That future minor amendments to the procedures be delegated to the Head of Planning Services in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To inform Members of the feedback from the provisional introduction of public speaking at Development Control Committee and seek their support for the permanent retention of the facility.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 In July 2006 Council approved the introduction of public speaking at Development Control Committee on a trial basis. After publication of the necessary advisory literature the procedure was first implemented at the Committee meeting on 21st November 2006.
- 3.2 Having operated the system for a while a questionnaire was sent to Members of the Committee to ascertain their experience of the process (see Appendix A). The views of participants were also sought via a telephone interview although their responses varied depending on the outcome of the determination of the planning application (see Appendix B). Parish Councils were also asked if they had received any feedback from their parishioners (only one had received feedback which was described as 'extremely positive'). Given that there was a change in the composition of the Committee following the District Elections in May 2007, it was felt that the process would benefit from an extension of the trial period in order to capture the experience of the new Committee Members (their views are included in Appendix A)

3.3 It can be seen that there is very little criticism of the procedure. Comments have been made about the length of time given to speak but in reality, 3 minutes has proven to be a sufficient length of time and very rarely have speakers had to be cut off. The limit ensures that speakers stick to the main points. The length of time that Members who do not sit on the Committee are given to speak is in line with the relevant Council Procedure Rules and does not therefore relate to speaking by members of the public.

3.4 Over time, minor amendments (for example to the order of proceeding particularly in relation to site visits) have been made to the process and it is the officers' view (setting aside minor problems that occasionally occur with the countdown clock) that the process now runs smoothly and is in an acceptable format to formally adopt on a permanent basis.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The costs of implementing the process (letters, plasma screens etc) were and continue to be covered by existing budgets.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The process of allowing public speaking at Development Control Committee is in line with Corporate Plan actions 'You at the Centre' and Higher Quality Services'.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 Public speaking at Development Control Committee allows decisions to be made openly and transparently and has improved access to services.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The procedure allows those that have views both in favour and against proposals an opportunity to present those views directly to Committee in a structured way that adds to the debate with regard particularly to controversial planning applications.

7.2 The procedure has been honed to the point where it is appropriate to formally adopt it on a permanent basis.

8.0 Background Papers

8.1 None other than those referred to in the report.