

**REPORT BY THE HEAD OF PLANNING, REGENERATION
AND REGULATORY SERVICES**

VERSION 2 OF THE PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER TRAINING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Members support for the proposed changes to the Protocol for Member Training in Planning Matters.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The protocol was first approved at Full Council in 2008. The reason for introducing such a protocol was to ensure that Members are kept up to date on the processes and procedures used within the Planning system and also to keep Members informed of any relevant changes in legislation.
- 2.2. As a new election period approaches, it is felt to be an opportune time to review the protocol and ensure it is being operated in the manner it was originally intended.
- 2.3. Planning Officers attend regular Continual Professional Development sessions and training sessions on new legislations and planning processes. The events arranged for Members are an ideal opportunity for staff to pass this information on to Members and also for Members and staff to exchange views on new processes.
- 2.4. The protocol has been largely successful therefore there are only minor amendments proposed. The look of the protocol has changed. This is simply to bring this protocol in line with all other protocols within Planning.
- 2.5. The first change is within paragraph 7 of the protocol. The additional criterion within this paragraph is intended to allow Members more opportunity to fulfill their training/development requirements. Members will often undertake a lot of work and research when representing the Council at Planning appeals. Members also spend a lot of time assisting constituents, or developers in Planning issues. Officers acknowledge that the research undertaken when assisting in appeals or meetings with developers/applicants can often be considerable. However, Members will be required to outline the level of their involvement in writing to the Development Control and Compliance Manager so that this can be recorded accordingly.
- 2.6. The second change relates to the issue of Members getting to the end of the Council year and not having met the requirement of two sessions. Following feedback from Members, this change has been made to ensure recognition of the fact that some Members are regular attendees at Planning Committees and therefore gain a lot of

knowledge and experience through such attendance.

- 2.7. An additional criterion has been included within paragraph 10 to ensure that regular attendees of Planning Committee are given 1 no. credit for attending a minimum of 8 Planning Committees in the Council year (March/April). However, it is not intended that Members of Planning Committee should only attend 1 no. training/development session each Council year, it is simply acknowledging that some Members may find it difficult to attend two sessions but should have some credit for attending Planning Committee on a regular basis.
- 2.8. There has been a note added at the bottom of the protocol that is intended to clarify the issue of whether the Members are to be prevented from voting if they do not fulfill the requirement of 2 no. training/development sessions in each Council year.
- 2.9. If a local authority has an adopted protocol for member training/development, it is likely that Members not meeting the required criteria are risking criticism from the Local Government Ombudsman or the Inspectorate in the event of a complaint or an appeal. Therefore it is noted that although the Member will not be prevented from voting, there is a morale obligation on the Member to meet the required training/development criteria.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1. That members accept the changes.

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1 - Original Member Training Protocol

Appendix 2 - Revised Member Training Protocol