

**INFORMATION REPORT BY THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND PUBLIC
PROTECTION**

STUDY INTO THE OPERATION OF PLANNING COMMITTEES IN WALES

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Planning Committee of the research project commissioned by the Welsh Government into the operation of Planning Committees in Wales. The report is for information purposes only at this stage.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Welsh Government intends to bring forward a White Paper at the end of 2013 on the future delivery of the planning system in Wales.
- 2.2 As part of this process they have sought an independent body to examine and research the operation of Planning Committees in Wales to determine whether there is a link between efficiency and effectiveness and committee size.
- 2.3 The current position is that consultants Fortismere Associates, supported by Arup have been appointed to undertake the research. The research objectives are:
- To determine whether there is a link between efficiency and effectiveness, committee size and consistency of decision making;
 - To examine the size and make up of Planning Committees;
 - To investigate the link between the development plan process and decision making on development proposals;
 - To consider good practice of the procedures used at Planning Committee meetings, including the speaking rights for all parties and measures to enable consistency in decision making;
 - To consider proposals for a national scheme of delegation of decision making powers, including minimum requirements;
 - To consider compulsory training for members of Planning Committees, including procedures where training requirements have not been met by individuals; and
 - To consider a code of conduct for members of Planning Committees and officers.

- 2.3 As part of an on-going review of planning processes here in Denbighshire it was the intention of the Head of Planning and Public Protection to look at the size of our Planning Committee, review its procedures and implement any required change accordingly. This was reflective of some recent feedback from Members. In particular it was thought timely to examine the greater use of technology in the presentation and running of Planning Committee and to examine the benefits or otherwise of a smaller Committee.
- 2.4 It would seem sensible to await the findings of the independent research before DCC sought to implement change to its current Committee size and procedures. Officers will clearly contribute to the research and provide any information required to the investigators. Members may also need to provide some feedback as and when requested and Officers can provide any necessary support to Members at that time. The Chair of Planning Committee has received a letter from the WLGA about this research.
- 2.5 The Royal Town Planning Institute proposes to allow the consultants to present their initial findings at their Annual Conference on 5th June 2013. There will be an opportunity for two Members from each Authority to attend the conference free of charge and Officers will provide further information on this in due course.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members note the contents of the information report and allow Officers to feed any necessary information on the operation of our Planning Committee to the independent consultants.