



Development Control Performance

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the report and resolve a course of action.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 This report is written to identify options available to help us hit or exceed the **90%** target expected by the Government of decisions made under delegated powers and to ease the burden on Planning Control Committee members. As members will be aware we are monitored quarterly on our performance and achieving the defined Government targets. We have to comply with these requirements or suffer the potential penalties that could follow. Accordingly I have provided this report to identify areas for improvement where officers and members have had some concerns.
- 2.2 I previously reported that in the quarter January – March we achieved **89%**. In the following quarter we achieved **88%**. In the last quarter July – September the number of delegated decisions has risen to **93%**. We are just about achieving the Government's aim of speeding up the planning process through increased delegation. As this is a fluctuating figure I propose that we revisit the delegation arrangements as 2.3 below.
- 2.3 The scheme of Delegations advises that the Planning control Committee determine individual applications for planning permission and advertisement control and any other application made under planning legislation where:
 - “2a. four or more objections have been received and the officer recommendation is to approve ,or
 - b. the application is contrary to a Local Plan allocation and the officer recommendation is to approve, or
 - c. a member of the Council has, within three weeks of being sent notification of an application, written to the Director of Regeneration and Community requesting its determination by the Committee.
3. approving the principal terms of planning and highways agreements.”

- 2.4 Of the four points above that require an application to be reported to the Committee rather than being a delegated officer decision only 2b has to remain unchanged. For the remainder I propose that we consider the following options:
- 2.5 Each of the following are not absolute but require consideration if we are to progress.
- a. **Four or more objections.** We now undertake a much wider consultation process than we did when the original scheme of delegation was prepared. As members may recall neighbour notification is now on the basis of a sliding scale rising from 4m to 15m distance from the application site depending on the size or height of the particular proposal. As a result of the wider publicity arrangements we are receiving considerably more letters of objections. I would propose that we could raise the number of objections necessary to require the matter to come before the committee from **4 to 10**. If we received up to and including 9 objection letters from different addresses we would continue the 'delegate briefing note' process that all Members will be familiar with.
 - b. **Conservation Area Advisory Committee.** Objections result in all applications recommended for approval to be reported to the Committee. Since February 2006 nine applications have had to come before the committee which could have otherwise followed the delegated briefing note process. Whilst I do welcome the valuable advice this committee gives I would suggest that:
 - 1. If CAAC object alone the matter is considered by the Chair and Vice Chair at our fortnightly meetings.
 - 2. If CAAC object in addition to no more than 9 addresses we follow the delegated briefing note process by consulting the Chair and ward members.
 - c. **Planning Agreements.** Under the current delegation arrangements 12 section 106 Agreements since February could have been delegated matters through the briefing note process if we had had a change in the delegation arrangements. I feel that it is important for Members to be aware of the Agreements that we enter into and would suggest that **if there is a need for a Planning Agreement**, and there are no other reasons to come before the Committee, the matter be considered by the Chair and Vice Chair at our fortnightly meetings.
 - d. **Members Requests** If any Councillor requests that an application be brought before the Committee then the current arrangement that the Member comes to the meeting to speak in support of the application should be formalised. The existing arrangements set out in 2.3 (2c) would remain applicable.

The above are examples of where I feel we could make significant in roads in improving our efficiency and performance through the Committee process. Each item has been drafted as exclusive of the other recommendations but a schedule of protocol can be prepared depending on which if any of the four points are agreed, for instance if there are 8 objections, CAAC object and there is a need for a section 106 Agreement the briefing note process followed by a presentation to the Chair and Vice Chair to agree the way forward would be followed.

By my calculations, taken from the February to October sample we would still be likely to have 4 and 5 applications to consider at each meeting that would fall without the suggested delegation arrangements. These would obviously be the more contentious proposals. In addition to these I would still anticipate proposals for telecommunications antennae and the major projects of substance that members should be aware of to be reported.

The result of adopting a-d would result in a consistent improvement in our delegation percentage figure. It would be likely to mean more Councillor briefing notes than at present and will enable the Chair and Vice Chair to take a more active role in the decision making process, leaving the Committee meetings themselves to focus upon the more contentious and major projects of substance.

Recommendation:

To agree to the proposed changes, as outlined at 2.5, to the scheme of Delegation.

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Background papers:	None or list
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 - title

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None.

Legal

2. None.

Personnel

3. None.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

4. None.