



GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MEETING : Tuesday, 13th March 2018

PRESENT : Cllrs. Williams (Chair), H. Norman (Vice-Chair), Taylor, Coole, Hansdot and Hyman

Others in Attendance

Managing Director
Principal Planning Officer
Democratic Services and Elections Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Hilton, Pullen and Hanman

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

16. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

17. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions and deputations.

18. PLANNING POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Paid Service recommending the dissolution of Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

The Principal Planning Officer advised that all local authorities had a duty to prepare a Local Plan for their areas, which reflected the needs and aspirations of the local community. Plans would cover a period of at least 15 years and be updated at least every five years.

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He explained that the Government was placing greater emphasis on the speed at which local authorities prepared and adopted their plans and proposed penalties for those that did not deliver. At the same time, the City Council was always looking for opportunities to work in smarter and more efficient ways with limited resources.

The Committee were advised that officers had explored options to streamline and create a more resource efficient process for Council decisions relating to planning policy, and the report recommended that Planning Policy Sub-Committee be dissolved. This would reduce the lead in times for reports from 4 – 6 weeks to around 2 weeks.

It was recognised that there was a need for better Member involvement in plan-making and the report proposed that a new Member Liaison Group was established which, amongst other things, would provide a more collaborative approach to plan-making and provide Members with a better understanding of complex / technical planning issues.

Councillor Hyman enquired as to which Members would be involved in the Member Liaison Group. The Principal Planning Officer advised that following approval of the recommendations by Council, the Group would be created in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and the Group Leaders for the three political parties.

Councillor Coole raised concerns regarding the Member Liaison Group and said he would be keen to ensure Members had significant involvement to make recommendations and adequate time to debate. He believed the Group would not offer formal powers which the Planning Policy Sub-Committee currently provided.

Councillor Taylor stated himself and the Vice Chair of Planning Policy Sub-Committee had already had some discussions with the Principal Planning Officer about the proposals. Members agreed to this approach as reports presented to the PPSC in advance of Council meetings, had created long-lead in times and policies were endorsed and then presented to Council, almost as a 'fait accompli'. Councillor Taylor believed the Member Liaison Group would give Members the opportunity to have more involvement and a better understanding of policies at an earlier stage.

The Vice Chair referred to paragraph 3.7 of the report and enquired how Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Council had established their Groups. The Principal Planning Officer advised that both these groups were informal and used as a discussion forum. He added that better Member involvement could potentially result in fewer Members' questions at Council meetings.

Councillor Coole reiterated his concerns that the Member Liaison Group would have no formal power to amend or shape the policies that are presented. Councillor Taylor believed that informal discussions with Officers would create robust policies.

Councillor Hyman raised concerns that no reference had been made to cross party support in the recommendation. The Committee agreed that an additional recommendation be added to reflect this.

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The recommendation to dissolve the Planning Policy Sub-Committee was put to the vote. Members were supportive of this proposal.

General Purposes Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- (1) The Planning Policy Sub-Committee is dissolved.
- (2) The Head of Place be authorised, in liaison with Group Leaders and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, to set up a cross-party Planning Policy Member Liaison Group.

19. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 26 June 2018 at 6.00pm.

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 6.15 pm hours

Chair