

**Report to:**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Relevant officer:**

Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships

**Date of meeting:**

16 October 2018

## **REVISED MEMBER AND OFFICER PROTOCOL AND REVISIONS TO THE PUBLIC SPEAKING PROCEDURE FOR PLANNING**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

1.1 To reconsider the revised draft Member and Officer Protocol for Planning for recommendation to Council and amendments to the public speaking arrangements for the Committee.

### **2.0 Recommendation(s):**

2.1 To recommend Council to approve as part of the Council's constitution the revised Member and Officer Protocol for Planning as attached at Appendix 6a.

2.2 To recommend to Council that the time period allowed for public representations is increased from five to seven minutes for objectors and applicants.

2.3 To agree a recommendation from this committee as to whether it wishes to amend the time period to seven minutes for each ward councillor who applies to speak, to be aligned with members of the public or whether to retain the status quo for councillors.

### **3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

3.1 The revisions to the member and officer protocol for planning have resulted from the previous peer review of planning and are intended to provide clarity for members, officers and the public.

The increase from five to seven minutes for the time period allowed for objectors and applicant sets out parameters for debate while allowing representations to be heard.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council?

No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None, the previous protocol is out of date so the approval of a revised version is necessary. Members may wish to consider a different time period for public speaking.

#### **4.0 Council priority:**

4.1 The relevant Council priority is 'The Economy: maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool'.

#### **5.0 Background information**

5.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of the Committee on 14 August 2018, they considered a report on proposed changes to the Protocol and public speaking procedures. This was following a workshop session held on 8 March 2018 with Planning Committee members and officers, to look at a recommendations arising from the Planning Peer review that related to the Committee.

#### **5.2 Revised Member and Officer Protocol for Planning**

5.2.1 Members will recall that the Protocol had not been updated for a number of years and it had been noted that the Council's current practice differed from the protocol. Equally the planning peer review had identified a number of areas of best practice. As a result of the workshop in March, a number of changes were made and these were considered by the Committee in August and recommended for Council approval. No changes have been made since that Planning meeting although the document is attached again as an appendix to this report.

#### **5.3 Speaking at Planning Committee meetings**

5.3.1 Currently the Council's rules of procedure allow one speaker for and one against, with a limit of five minutes and an unlimited period for ward councillors. At the March workshop session, members expressed a wish to increase the time limit for members of the public but also to introduce an element of consistency by also adding this limit to apply to ward councillors. The view was that this would allow sufficient time for representations, give parity to members of the public, but avoid significant levels of repetition.

5.3.2 Following the workshop, research into best practice showed that the Council is in line with other Councils in terms of time limits, although that some Councils allowed

multiple speakers both for and against applications and some did not differentiate ward councillors in their schemes. When the matter was considered by the Planning Committee in August 2018, members recommended that Council amends the public speaking rules for planning to extend the limit for members of the public to seven minutes for both those speaking for and against and additionally for this limit to also apply for ward councillors. It should be noted that there remains discretion for the Chairman, with the agreement of the Committee, to extend the time limit for speaking.

5.3.3 At the Council meeting held on 19 September 2018, there were some views expressed that the time limits, in particular for those for ward members, should be reconsidered. As a result, Council agreed to defer the matter back to this Committee for reconsideration. Members will need to consider therefore whether they wish to submit a revised recommendation to the next Council meeting.

5.4 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.5 **List of appendices:**

5.6 Appendix 6a: Revised Member and Officer Protocol for Planning

6.0 **Legal considerations:**

6.1 None.

7.0 **Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 None.

8.0 **Equalities considerations:**

8.1 None.

9.0 **Financial considerations:**

9.1 None.

10.0 **Risk management considerations:**

10.1 None.

11.0 **Ethical considerations:**

11.1 None.

**12.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

12.1 A workshop was held in March 2018 at which Planning Committee members and planning officers attended and the proposed revisions were as a result of the workshop. The Planning Peer review also indicated a need to review the Protocol.

**13.0 Background papers:**

13.1 None.