

Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships
Date of Meeting	21 November 2018

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

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider a revised draft Member and Officer Protocol for Planning and amendments to the public speaking arrangements, following reconsideration of the item at the Planning Committee on 16 October 2018 (following the referral at the last Council meeting).

2.0 Recommendation(s):

To agree the recommendations from the Planning Committee:

2.1 To approve as part of the Council's Constitution the revised Member and Officer Protocol for Planning as attached at Appendix 8(a).

2.2 To adopt the revised public speaking arrangements outlined in the report namely:

- that the time period allowed for public representations is increased from five to seven minutes for objectors and applicants
- that the time period of seven minutes is allowed for each ward councillor who applies to speak (to be aligned with the arrangements for members of the public).

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.

3.2 The increase from five to seven minutes for the time period allowed for objectors, applicants and each ward councillor sets out parameters for representations to be heard on a consistent and equitable basis.

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None, the previous protocol is out of date so the approval of a revised version is necessary. An alternative option would be to retain the current procedures for speaking at Planning Committee meetings.

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 last Council meeting, they considered a recommendation from the Planning Committee on 14 August 2018, in relation to 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. At the last Council meeting, it was resolved to refer the item back to the Planning Committee for reconsideration, in particular in relation to the time limits for speaking at Planning Committee meetings. The Planning Committee reconsidered the item on 16 October 2018.

5.2 Revised Member and Officer Protocol for Planning

5.2.1 As reported at the last Council meeting, the Protocol has not been updated for a number of years and members of the Planning Committee when initially considering this, had noted that the Council's current practice differed from the protocol and that 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 Planning Committee in August 2018 and recommended for Council approval. When the item was reconsidered at the October 2018 meeting, the Planning Committee made no changes to the original proposals for revision. 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 applying this procedure for 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. It was felt at the time that that would provide a consistent and fair approach.

5.3.2 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 each ward councillor, acknowledging the need to enable sufficient time for representations to be made balanced with the need for these to be concise.

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 the Planning Committee for reconsideration.

5.3.4 The matter was considered again on 16 October 2018 and the Committee resolved to recommend a time limit of seven minutes for both members of the public and each ward councillor in making representations, as originally set out in the last report to Council. During the discussion, it was noted that, if agreed, the time limits would apply to representations and did not limit any debate thereafter. It was also noted that the Chairman, with the agreement of the Committee, would have discretion on any extension to time limits.

5.4 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.5 **List of Appendices:**

Appendix 8(a) - 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 between Planning officers and members of the Planning Committee was held in March 2018 at which members expressed a wish to change the public speaking procedures for ward councillors and the public in interest of fairness and consistency. The changes were recommended for approval at both the Planning Committee meetings on held on 14 August 2018 and 16 October 2018 where Committee also agreed to recommend the revised Protocol.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.