

# **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE MEMBERS' GROUND RULES**

## **All Members of the Council**

- Should only ask for an application to be referred to Strategic Development Control Committee when there is a good (preferably “planning”) reason for doing so. This must be explained in the request. The reason given will be included in the public report to Committee.
- Must follow the Council’s Members’ Planning Code of Good Practice.

## **Members of Strategic Development Control Committee**

Agree they will work within the following framework:

### The meeting

- That the Committee should not operate, or appear to operate, on a party-political basis.
- The overall aim should be to complete the business on the agenda in a single session.
- Members must be aware of the public perception of Strategic DCC, and how this can be harmed by Members chatting amongst themselves.
- Members will be alive to the need to present an even-handed, professional and positive image to all those members of the public who attend the meeting whether this is as applicants/agents, supporters, objectors or observers.
- Members should not leave the meeting before the end unless this is unavoidable and they explain to the Chairman the reasons for this (the Chairman may need to explain the reason for this departure to the public).
- If the numbers of Members starts to drop the remaining Members will be particularly mindful of the image this creates to the public and the need to remain quorate (The Quorum for Strategic DCC is 3)

### The Report

- Members should ensure they read and understand reports and the agenda before the meeting.
- Members should seek clarification of any points (including declarations of interest) with the case officer, presenting officer or legal officer before the start of the meeting.

### The Debate

- Members must only make decisions on applications on planning grounds.
- If proposing that the officer’s recommendation is not agreed Members must give a clear justification for this in planning terms, including planning reasons for refusal where they are proposing this.
- Members must exercise self-control about their involvement in the debate, and think twice about whether they need to contribute to it. They should not repeat what previous speakers have said.
- Members should avoid contributing to a debate more than once unless it is absolutely necessary and is adding something relevant to the discussion.
- When speaking as Local Member Strategic DCC Members should make this clear at the start but should still be concise in their address to Committee and remain focussed on planning issues.

- When speaking Members should have regard to the informal maximum “target” of four minutes, but any subsequent contribution should be substantially shorter.

#### Site Visits

- It is intended to minimise or avoid the need for site visits following the Committee by arranging for the Committee to visit sites where necessary during the application process.
- When requesting a Site Visit, Members must make it clear what others are being asked to go and look at – “political” site visits are to be avoided.
- When considering a report that has been the subject of a site visit Members should be guided by those who were on the site visit.

#### Training

- All Members of Strategic DCC should complete appropriate training as soon as possible after joining the Committee.
- That all Members of Strategic DCC use their best endeavours to attend additional seminars or training sessions that are arranged.

#### The Authority of the Chairman

- All Members of Strategic DCC must accept the authority of the Chairman in applying this framework.
- Members should avoid giving advice to the Chairman from the floor.

### **Local Members not on Strategic DCC who wish to come and talk on an application**

- Should agree this with the Chairman beforehand.
- Should make it clear at the start of their speech that they are acting in that capacity.
- Should limit their contribution to the debate to four minutes in line with the informal target maximum for Strategic DCC Members.

### **Informal Briefing Group**

- All Members will be provided with a work programme for the Committee which will detail applications which have been received which fall within the threshold of the Committee.
- The work programme will schedule a Briefing Group meeting which will enable Members of Strategic DCC and Local Members to examine and, if appropriate, undertake site visits regarding applications that have been received which fall within the threshold of the Committee.
- The Briefing Group meeting will provide an opportunity for Officers and Members to highlight issues arising from the application before it is formally considered by Strategic DCC.
- Briefing Group meetings will normally take place after, or in place of, a scheduled formal meeting of Strategic DCC.

November 2007