



Report to Cabinet

Date: 1st March 2022

Title: **Member Engagement in Planning - Select Committee Report**

Relevant councillor(s) Councillor Chris Poll, Chairman of the review group

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Ward(s) affected: *Not ward specific*

Recommendations:

Recommendations made by the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee to Cabinet are that:

- 1) A Member Planning Handbook should be produced to provide members with practical information that will assist them in dealing with local planning casework.
- 2) All members should be able to access and receive training on how to use a GIS map to enable them to look up planning application details and other useful information such as flood plains, conservation areas etc to help them respond to planning queries from residents.
- 3) A short guidance note should be provided for officers and members explaining the benefits of working in partnership, to enable public participation in planning and promote a wider understanding of the process. This should set out reasonable expectations in terms of how queries will be managed, including timescales.
- 4) A series of 'informal' Meet the Planners events should be held to enable members and officers to meet and chat in a relaxed atmosphere, to help to cultivate trust and collaboration.
- 5) Political Awareness training should be offered to planning staff to support them in working effectively with Members. This could be facilitated by the Democratic Services team, who would work with the Head of Planning and Development to agree content and delivery timescales.

6) There should be a review of the new Member Surgeries in June 2022 to consider the level of participation and feedback from both members and officers regarding their effectiveness.

Reason for decision: For Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee agreed to set up a rapid review into Member Engagement in Planning at its meeting on 14th October 2021. The Chairman asked Cllr Chris Poll if he would chair the review group and four other councillors volunteered to participate.
- 1.2 During November and December 2021, the review group collected evidence through meetings and by conducting a survey of elected members and planning staff. The review group then met in January to discuss and agree its key findings and recommendations which are presented in the report found at Appendix 1.

2. Other options considered

- 2.1 Appendix 1 provides further context to the Select Committee's recommendations. Cabinet is asked to consider these recommendations and provide a response.

3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 These will be considered as part of the Cabinet's response.

4. Corporate implications

- 5.1 These will be considered as part of the Cabinet's response.

5. Consultation with local Councillors & Community Boards

- 5.1 The report and recommendations were produced by a cross-party review group of Members from the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee.
- 5.2 Part of the evidence gathering phase of the review included an online survey which was emailed to all 147 members of the Council. 59 responses were received which is a 40% response rate.

6. Next steps and review

- 6.1 As noted above, Cabinet will provide a response to the Select Committee recommendations at its meeting on 1st March 2022. The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee will then receive an update after 6 months and 12 months to monitor the implementation of these recommendations.

7. Background papers

- 7.1 Minutes of the meeting of Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee 14th October 2022
<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g16799/Printed%20minutes%2014th-Oct-2021%2010.00%20Growth%20Infrastructure%20Housing%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=1>