

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

<b>Meeting:</b>	Development Control Committee
<b>Date:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> September 2004
<b>Subject:</b>	Training for Members of Development Control Committee
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	Chief Planning Officer
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	Planning, Development, Housing and Best Value
<b>Status:</b>	Part 1
<b>Ward:</b>	None
<b>Enclosures:</b>	None.

### 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report addresses the identified need for a systematic and rigorous programme of training for all members (and reserve members) of the Development Control (DC) Committee. It sets out proposals for the programme and seeks authority to amend Committee procedures to require members to attend the agreed programme prior to attending and voting at meetings.

### 2. **Recommendations**

#### 2.1 **For Development Control Committee:**

The Committee is recommended to agree to the training programme as set out in paragraph 6 of the report.

- 2.1.1 To recommend to Council that the Committee Procedural rules for the Development Control Committee be amended to require members and reserve members to have undertaken an appropriate course of training prior to them taking seats on the Committee and voting on planning decisions.

**REASONS:** To provide Members of the Development Control Committee with appropriate training to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

### 3. **Consultation with Ward Councillors**

- 3.1 There has been informal consultation with Party Leaders, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing & Development and Nominated Members of DC Committee.

### 4. **Policy Context**

4.1 The need for a more rigorous approach to training for Members of the Development Control Committee has been highlighted in an independent review of the Development Control Committee undertaken for the Chief Executive and reinforced in the recent evaluation of Planning Performance by ODPM, which is also reported on this agenda. The Planning & Development Improvement Plan 2004/05 – 2006/07 included provision for a Member training programme.

4.2 Previously member training has been provided following the Council elections, and made available to all interested Councillors. Any additional training has been intermittent and ad hoc. The issue was raised by the 'Nolan' Committee in 1997 which made a number of recommendations designed to ensure public confidence in the planning process, including "All members of an authority's planning committee (or equivalent) should receive training in the planning system, either before serving on the committee, or as soon as possible after their appointment". This recommendation has subsequently been endorsed by Government, the Local Government Association and the Royal Town Planning Institute.

## 5. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

5.1 The report addresses the Council's stated priorities of enhancing the environment and developing a prosperous and sustainable economy.

## 6. **The Training Programme**

6.1 Following discussions with the Royal Town Planning Institute, a training programme is now proposed for agreement. The first three phases would be:-

- **2<sup>nd</sup> October** (Repeated on **16<sup>th</sup> October**) : Whole day session – Introducing the Planning System and Guidance on Ethical Standards.
- **1<sup>st</sup> November** (Evening) : The 2004 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act
- **18<sup>th</sup> November** (Evening): Local Development Frameworks

6.2 Further sessions will be held in the new year covering:

- Design and density
- Enforcement
- Listed buildings and conservation
- Planning and Propriety

6.3 All courses will be run by accredited senior members of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

## 7. **Changes to Committee Procedures**

7.1 Following discussions with Party Leaders and Nominated Members, it is proposed that attending an agreed training programme should be a requirement of serving on the Development Control Committee. It is therefore imperative that existing Committee Members and Reserves, together with any members who may wish to serve on the Committee in the future, should attend. In addition, any members of the Strategic Planning Advisory Panel who are not DC members are advised to attend.

7.2 The necessary amendments to Committee Procedures are recommended to reflect this requirement, which will only come into force once the initial programme has been

completed. It will be necessary to organise programmes following the Local Elections 2006 for any new members, and update sessions will be necessary in the light of changing advice, guidance or policy.

## 8. **Finance Observations**

- 8.1 The cost of the training programme will be approximately £15k in 2004/05. The Service Improvement Plan allocated a sum of £5k for member training, to be funded from Planning Delivery Grant. There has been an under spend on items to be funded from PDG in the current year, in particular where there have been delays in recruiting, and the additional funding requirement can therefore be met within existing budgets.

## 9. **Legal Observations**

- 9.1 Included in the report.

## 10. **Conclusions**

There is widespread agreement that there is a need for a systematic and thorough programme of training for members of the Development Control Committee. To ensure its implementation and effectiveness it is also recommended that attending the training programme should be a requirement prior to members taking their seat on the Committee. While this is clearly not possible in current circumstances, it should be implemented from the date of completion of the programme.

## 11. **Author**

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