

PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON MEETING	Agenda Item No. 3
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Report of the Director of Operations

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CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION AND NEW GUIDANCE ON THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR PARISH COUNCILS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline potential changes to the Council's Constitution in respect of the operation of the Council's Planning and Environmental Protection Committee (PEPC) and to introduce new guidance for parish councils and community groups on the planning process.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 23rd February 2010 PEPC considered a report proposing a number of changes to the public speaking scheme and other minor changes to the Constitution. It is good practice to periodically review and if appropriate revise the governance arrangements for the Council's committees. A number of changes have been proposed in order to simplify existing provisions and to add clarity.

- 2.2 The existing public speaking scheme for PEPC has been in place for a number of years and was identified for review. The main reasons for review are to enable more efficient administration and to simplify existing provisions. A number of issues have been highlighted in recent months with regard to the amount of time allocated for specific groups of speakers and also the deadline for the cut off for registering to speak. The proposed amendments to the public speaking scheme include a simplified order of speaking and encompass a new provision for the submission of written information which had not previously been included.

- 2.3 The new provisions include:

- Any Ward Councillor, Parish Council (or other groups defined in local planning policy as operating in a manner similar to a Parish Council) representative or member of the public who wish to address the Committee on any planning application or any consultation item referred from another local authority, must register with the Chief Executive by 12.00 hours on the Friday before the meeting. (*previously 16.00 hours the day before the*

meeting)

- The total time allowed for speeches from Ward Councillors will not be more than ten minutes unless the Committee decide on the day of the meeting to extend the time allowed due to unusual or exceptional circumstances. *(no previous restriction)*
- MPs will be permitted to address the Committee when they have been asked to represent their constituents. Proof of this fact should be submitted to the Committee. The total time allowed for speeches for MPs will not be more than five minutes unless the Committee decide on the day of the meeting to extend the time allowed due to unusual or exceptional circumstances. *(no previous restriction)*
- In lieu of speaking, Ward Councillors, Parish Council representatives and members of the public may submit representations in writing for consideration by the Committee. Written representations will be reported to the Committee in an update report and circulated on the day of the meeting. Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors, members of the public, agents or applicants may request, in lieu of attending the meeting that their response is read by the Clerk at the committee. The total time allowed for the reading of written submissions will be calculated on the day of the meeting and will be dependent on the number of people in attendance wishing to speak. *(new provision)*

2.4 The order of conduct at PEPC will be as follows:

- Council officers will introduce the item
- Representations by ward councillors
- PEPC Members' questions to ward councillors
- Representations by Parish Council representative
- PEPC Members' questions to Parish Council representative
- Objectors representations
- PEPC Members' questions to objectors
- Representations by the applicant, agent and any supporters
- PEPC Members questions to the applicant, agent and any supporters
- Council Officers' comments
- PEPC Members will debate the application and obtain advice from officers where appropriate
- PEPC Members will reach a decision

- 2.5 It is not proposed to remove the provision for parish councils to refer planning applications to PEPC, although all such referrals must be based on material planning grounds. To help parish councils, the Planning Service has prepared a new guidance note 'The Planning Process – A Guide for Parish Councils'.

3. CONSULTATION/KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The views of parish councils on the proposed changes to the operation of PEPC are welcomed. At the meeting on 23rd February 2010, PEPC resolved to support the changes to the Constitution and these will now be considered by Council, together with any representations received.

4. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

The Council's Constitution

5. APPENDICES

'The Planning Process – A Guide for Parish Councils and Community Groups'.

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