

## Review of Training to Planning Applications Committee

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 8 February 2017.

Review of training to Planning Applications Committee to aid development of future training programme

Recommendation: The Committee's views be invited on training received and recommendations for the development of a training programme for future members and substitutes of the Planning Applications Committee following the County Council elections in May 2017.

**Local Members: N/A**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

### Background

1. Planning is a positive and proactive role that facilitates the delivery of a number of Government and Corporate objectives. It plays a key role in the shaping of our communities and landscapes, delivering sustainable development that balances competing social, economic and environmental needs. As a quasi judicial process, the determination of planning applications needs to comply with planning law, regulation and guidance. Planning decisions are challengeable via a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, the ombudsman or judicial review in the High Court. Such challenges whether successful or not bring considerable financial and reputational costs.
2. The determination of planning decisions at committee is one of the most visible ways in which a local authority makes decisions and is often seen as the public face of decision making. It is therefore important that the committee members are well informed so that planning decisions are lawful and based upon sound judgement and justifiable planning reasons.
3. Training for committee members is not mandatory, although it is considered best practice and is compulsory in many local authorities. The Local Government Association recommends that due to the complexity of the planning system and the frequent changes to it, that planning committee members should receive appropriate and ongoing training. In the case of Kent, training is supported in the Constitution and the Kent County Council Standards Committee Advice Note 4, 2009. There is an expectation that Members should receive training and development to assist them in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.
4. The practice of this Committee has been to ensure all Members and potential substitutes are trained prior to sitting on the Committee, with a general induction, supported by ongoing training. The induction session post the Council election in May 2013 took the form of a day at Shorne Country Park. It covered:
  - Introduction to Planning;
  - The Role of the Committee;
  - Material Considerations
  - Key Topics – AONBs, Green Belt, Nature Conservation, Climate Change and Renewables;

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- Planning Conditions and Legal Agreements;
  - Mineral and Waste Local Plan
  - Probity
  - Summary
5. Subsequent training has usually taken place on the afternoon of the Committee. Topics have reflected Member's requests or arisen due to changes in planning law, guidance or practice that were relevant to decision making. In addition, the Committee has had an annual visit to a number of sites post construction. This has proven to be a worthy exercise to assess the quality of the both the decision making and the development. It also provided an opportunity to assess how successfully concerns that were raised during the planning process were addressed and any lessons that could be learnt for future developments. Appendix 1 sets out the training that has taken place since 2013.
6. Work will shortly commence on preparing a training programme for the new Committee Members post the Council elections in May 2017. In preparing the programme, I would particularly value the views of the current Committee Members on the training they have received, the breadth and adequacy of topics, any omissions, delivery style and the effectiveness of the training in helping you deliver the responsibilities of the Planning Applications Committee.

### Recommendation

7. I RECOMMEND that the Committee's views be invited on training received and recommendations for the development of a training programme for future members and substitutes of the Planning Applications Committee following the County Council elections in May 2017.

Sharon Thompson - Head of Planning Applications
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Background Documents:
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Kent CC Standards Committee Advice Note 4 2009 Kent CC Constitution
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## Review of Training to Planning Applications Committee

## APPENDIX 1

## Training undertaken by Planning Applications Committee 2013 – 2017

Date	Training	Venue
June 2013	Induction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Planning;</li> <li>• The Role of the Committee;</li> <li>• Material Considerations</li> <li>• Key Topics – AONBs, Green Belt, Nature Conservation, Climate Change and Renewables;</li> <li>• Planning Conditions and Legal Agreements;</li> <li>• Appeals and Enforcement</li> <li>• Mineral and Waste Local Plan</li> <li>• Probity</li> <li>• Summary</li> </ul>	Shorne Wood Country Park
July 2013	Mineral and Waste Planning Issues Highway Matters Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan	County Hall
October 2013	National Domestic Extremism – Beyond Lawful Protest	County Hall
November 2013	Government advice on Handling Proposals for Onshore Oil and Gas	County Hall
February 2014	Planning and Biodiversity	County Hall
October 2014	Training Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Probity in Planning</li> <li>• Role of Highways &amp; Transportation in Development Management</li> <li>• Planning – A positive and Proactive Role</li> <li>• Archaeology</li> </ul>	Lullingstone Country Park
May 2015	Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan Update Ebbsfleet Garden City	County Hall
June 2015	Site Tour of Permitted Developments	Schools in Swale Area and Waste Activities in Ridham Dock, including MVV facility
July 2015	Environmental Impact Assessments	County Hall
October 2015	Site Visit to permitted aggregate quarry	Hermitage Quarry, Maidstone
November 2015	Probity in Planning : Kelton v. Wiltshire Judgement	County Hall
April 2016	Site Tour of permitted Basic Need School Developments	Tunstall, Thistle Hill, Sheppey, Holborough and Wouldham
May 2016	Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan update	County Hall