

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 10TH APRIL, 2025

REFERENCE FROM GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 24TH MARCH, 2025

“ AUDIT WALES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNANCE OF THE PLANNING SERVICE - PLANNING PROTOCOL, PLANNING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, AND AMENDED SCHEME OF DELEGATION (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 6th March, 2025 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Head of Sustainable Development.

Councillor E. Goodjohn queried whether the Protocol was a public facing document as it was not the easiest of reads for members of the public. He suggested that certain elements of the Protocol could be shortened such as the section on declarations. He also added that he was not sure whether the first 3 pages would be of relevance to the public. In reply, the Head of Sustainable Development stated that there was a balance as the Protocol was also meant for agents, applicants as well as Elected Members. Therefore, there was a wide audience for which it would be difficult to cover all aspects with a small document. The Head of Sustainable Development agreed to reflect on the Councillors' comments.

Councillor J. Protheroe referred to Planning application search function and queried whether that could be made more user friendly. The Head of Sustainable Development agreed for that to be looked at, as well the signposting of Planning services on the website.

The Chair, G. Chapman, raised a series of points for consideration in regard to Appendix B (Planning Protocol):

- Paragraph 5.9 - clarity regarding the type of interest being referred to was it pecuniary, prejudicial or personal;
- Paragraph 5.11 - clarity as to whether an Elected Member could take part in a debate if they had pre-determined an application;
- Paragraph 6.4 - inclusion of the full name of the 2011 Act that was being referred to;
- Throughout the Protocol officers referred to should be defined;
- The inclusion of a Glossary of Terms;
- Consistency with referring to Elected Members and using one specific title;
- Paragraph 7.2 – clarification regarding the legitimacy of allowing Vale of Glamorgan Elected Members 5 minutes speaking time, against public speakers being allowed 3 minutes speaking time;

- Paragraphs 9.7 and 9.8 and clarification as to whether it was legitimate for Elected Members with a personal or prejudicial interest to be able to speak at a Planning Committee meeting;
- Paragraph 11.1 required capitalisation of the letter P for the term Planning Officer;
- Paragraphs 14.2 to 14.8 regarding site visits were repetitive and just including paragraph 14.7 provided sufficient detail;
- Should members of the public be invited to site visits and there should be further regard to who could speak;
- Paragraph 20.1 – title Head of the Planning Service to be amended to Head of Sustainable Development.

With regard to the Terms of Reference (Appendix C), the Chair queried paragraph 1.7 limits meetings of Planning Committees to 4 hours, was that fair and reasonable and was it too much.

For the Scheme of Delegation at Appendix D, the Chair referred to paragraph 1.2 and stated that there should be a definition of who were the ‘other nominated officers’. In addition, in paragraph 3.1e there was a missing capital letter P for the title Principal Planning Officer and for paragraph 8.1 there needed to be further definition of who the authorising officers were.

Councillor E. Goodjohn stated that not all the issues highlighted were because of the Planning process, for example the length of meetings would have come out of a survey of Members around what they judged as a reasonable length of time. In terms of twin hatted Members who sat on the Vale of Glamorgan Council and either a Town or Community Council and which would have previously considered an application, Members had been declaring at meetings that they would be looking at the matters from afresh. In addition, there was an understanding that Members with a prejudicial interest were still able to speak at Committee meetings where members of the public also had a right to speak, but they would have to leave the meeting once they had spoken.

There being no further comments, it was

RESOLVED – T H A T the changes proposed, and points of clarification raised by the Governance and Audit Committee be referred back to Cabinet for its consideration prior to reporting to Full Council.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.”