

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Audit and Governance Committee

Date **9 February 2015**

Report of: **Monitoring Officer**

Subject: **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO OFFICERS IN RESPECT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE AND THE PLANNING COMMITTEE DEPUTATION SCHEME**

SUMMARY

Fareham Borough Council is working with Vanguard Consulting to improve the way in which services are provided to its customers.

In February 2014 Vanguard consultants began working closely with the Development Management Service and began a full intervention into the processing of planning applications.

A number of changes have been made to the way in which planning officers deal with planning applications to make the process easier, faster and more inclusive for those using the service.

The Intervention has now arrived at a point where changes to the way in which the Planning Committee works, will assist further in the Council's ambition to ensure that the services provided meet the needs of its customers. The appended report sets out recommended changes to the way the Planning Committee works to meet these ambitions.

Members of the Audit & Governance Committee are asked to review the proposed amendments and make their recommendations to Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Governance Committee:

- (a) notes the comments of the Planning Committee; and
- (b) recommends to Council that proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers in respect of the Planning Committee and the Planning Committee Deputation Scheme as set out in paragraphs 38 and 48 of the report at Appendix A, along with the minor amendments and clarifications recommended by the Planning Committee in paragraph 5 of the report be agreed.

INTRODUCTION

1. Members will be aware that Vanguard Consulting has been working with Officers across a range of services within Fareham Borough Council.
2. The Vanguard intervention with Development Management began in February 2014 and is now well underway. The primary area of focus to date has been around how planning and related applications are processed.

INTERVENTION FINDINGS

3. The Intervention has now arrived at a point where changes to the way in which the Planning Committee works, will assist further in the Council's ambition to ensure that the services provided meet the needs of its customers.
4. A report by the Head of Development Management gives further details on the findings of the intervention and the suggested changes to working procedures. The report was considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 28 January 2015 and is attached at Appendix A.
5. In considering the report, the Planning Committee agreed the following minor amendments and clarifications:
 - (a) with regard to the number of representations that needed to be received before an application would automatically be reported to Committee, it was confirmed that if 5 letters of representation were received on an application raising material planning issues, regardless as to whether they were all against the officer's recommendation or not, that application would be reported to the Committee for decision;
 - (b) with regard to how petitions would be handled under the proposed changes, it was confirmed that if a petition was received raising material planning issues which contained 5 or more signatures from different households then that application would be reported to the Committee;
 - (c) Members requested that paragraph 44 of the report be expanded to state that any member who calls in an application must attend the Committee when that item is considered;
 - (d) with regard to informal Member briefings, it was clarified that no planning applications would be presented to the informal Member briefing and then decided on the same day in the formal Planning Committee.
6. The Planning Committee unanimously supported the proposals and resolved to recommend the changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers in respect of the Planning Committee and the Planning Committee Deputation Scheme as set out in paragraphs 38 and 48 of the report, to the Audit and Governance Committee for its consideration, subject to the amendments in paragraph 5.

RISK ASSESSMENT

7. If the recommended changes are not supported, it could:
 - (a) reduce the Council's ability to fully deliver a Development Management service which meets the needs of its customers;

- (b) reduce the scope for the Planning Committee to spend greater amounts of time on significant pre-application proposals and planning applications;
- (c) mean that a number of applicants will have to wait significantly longer to get a decision on their application ; and
- (d) require Development Management Officers to continue to invest considerable time and resources on producing reports for the Planning Committee on small scale matters, many of which the Planning Committee does not wish to discuss.

SUMMARY

8. The Audit and Governance Committee are requested to review the proposed changes and to recommend the subsequent changes to the relevant parts of the Constitution to the Council for approval.

Reference Papers:

Report to Planning Committee 28 January 2015

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Leigh Usher. (Ext 4553)