

CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING POLICY & CITY DEVELOPMENT

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy & City Development held on Tuesday, 26 July 2022 at 3.30 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Lee Hunt (in the Chair)

Councillors Ryan Brent
Judith Smyth

13. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

14. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15. Housing Delivery Test Action Plan

The Assistant Director of Planning & Economic Growth introduced the report.

In response to comments and questions from the group spokespersons it was confirmed that:

- Regardless of housing need there was a presumption in favour of development;
- Student halls were considered as C2 residential accommodation within Portsmouth;
- Ideally this report would have been considered by 19 July, however there were no penalties for the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2022 to be considered at this time;
- Neighbourhood Plans within the city were supported and felt to be a positive influence on the delivery of housing;
- There was a temporary amendment to housing delivery numbers during the covid-19 pandemic and the document took this into account in respect of housing delivery numbers;

Councillors discussed housing numbers for a number of key areas within the city and was advised that Tipner East was looking to overperform significantly than anticipated in the 2012 Core Strategy to arrive at a similar if not higher overall number for Tipner than stated in the City Deal. In respect of the city centre, 1,600 identified in the 2012 Core Strategy, but it was anticipated that the actual delivery could be four or five times this number.

The Cabinet member highlighted that the council as planning authority gave permissions but could not force delivery. 2,700 homes had been permitted over the three year period, but only 1,261 had been delivered.

The Cabinet Member for Planning Policy & City Development approved the recommendations.

RESOLVED that the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2022, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for publication and implementation.

16. Options for increasing Planning Committee Capacity

The Assistant Director of Planning & Economic Growth introduced the report. He reminded that there were over 100 cases awaiting committee determination at the time the report was drafted. Typically, applicants were having to wait around nine months for their application to be considered by the Planning Committee.

In respect of the second recommendation, he advised of the financial implications of holding additional meetings for which there was no identified budget. If minded to support this recommendation, it would require a further decision to agree the funding source.

Councillors debated the merits of the recommendations and the related options in terms of recommendation 1 in respect of possible amendments to the Scheme of Delegation.

In response to specific questions, it was explained that:

- Para 53 'Any applications which are recommended for approval and that seek planning permission for 1,000 square metres or more of new non-residential floor area or for six or more new dwellings' was not an uncommon position, however its removal would not prohibit other avenues for such schemes to be considered by the Planning Committee, such as objections from members or statutory consultees. It would however stop uncontentious schemes of this size automatically being considered by the Planning Committee; and
- In respect of para 57, which detailed the threshold for the number of objections required for consideration at Planning Committee, it was confirmed that this number varied between different local authorities. The current threshold of three was not unusual, however Southampton City Council required five objections and Winchester City Council required six or more.

During the discussion opposition spokespersons commented that:

- The amendment to Para 57 agreed in November 2021, which raised the threshold from one objector to three and dispensed with the need for objectors to attend a Planning Committee to make a deputation had realised a positive effect on the number of applications being

considered by the Planning Committee and had not received any adverse comments;

- The removal of Para 53 was felt to be helpful;
- Planning Committee members would not be opposed to holding additional meetings;
- Potentially the amendment of Para 51 could be considered to increase the threshold from one to three or more members to require an application to be considered by the Planning Committee; and
- Reservations were aired about increasing the threshold on the number of objectors required for Planning Committee consideration. Changes to the Scheme of Delegation should not put efficiency over democracy and it was suggested that proposals for any such changes instead be considered, cross party, by the Constitution Working Group.

The Cabinet Member explained that applicants wanted their planning applications determined in a timely manner and that the administration and officers were under pressure to reduce the current backlog of applications awaiting Planning Committee determination.

He didn't feel able to agree to additional meetings, due to the budgetary considerations detailed within the report. He had considered the different options for reducing the backlog at length and noted that raising the threshold to six objectors would cut the backlog of applications awaiting Planning Committee determination by almost half. He also noted that this threshold was not unprecedented, as it would mirror that of Winchester City Council.

On balance, whilst not ideal, he believed that the need for people to have their planning applications determined in a timely manner outweighed the slight democratic deficit of raising the threshold of objectors required for Planning Committee determination. Any member would still be able to request that an application be determined by the Planning Committee and he had no intention to fetter this ability by increasing this threshold.

The Cabinet Member for Planning Policy & City Development

RESOLVED that the scheme of delegation for planning decision making be amended by:

- 1. The deletion of paragraph 53 of Part 2 Section 5B (Director of Regeneration) of the constitution; and**
- 2. The amendment of paragraph 57 of Part 2 Section 5B (Director of Regeneration) of the constitution so that the threshold applied to a requirement for Committee determination is where six or more adverse representations based on material planning considerations have been received.**

The meeting concluded at 4.47 pm.

Councillor Lee Hunt
Cabinet Member for Planning Policy & City Development