

Appendix 5

COMMENTS OF WORKING PARTIES AND COMMITTEES

Constitution Working Party – 6 February 2024

- It was suggested that further work be undertaken to assess the potential impact of increasing the objection threshold from four to six and whether this would result in a tangible reduction in the number of applications considered at committee-level.
- It would be useful to have a report following 12 months of operating the revised arrangements that identified the impact that the new arrangements had made.
- The views of area committees would be useful in informing the progressions of these proposals.
- The removal of householder applications from the purview of committees would have a more significant impact on some area committees than others.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(2) That the report be referred to area committees for comment prior to its consideration by the Cabinet and the Council Meeting.

Planning & Highways Regulation Committee – 8 February 2024

It was noted that a number of applications came to the Committee where they had received no objections, and where area committees were supportive of the proposal, but required this Committee's approval because they fell within the green belt. In response, it was stated that currently where a proposed development was contrary to the adopted UDP, these applications required committee-level approval. However, a proportion of such applications would no longer require committee approval due to a proposed amendment to the Scheme of Delegation to allow officers to determine applications where a current policy of the Council was out of date.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Scrutiny

Corporate, Resource Management & Governance Scrutiny Committee – 27 February 2024

- Members asked about consultations undertaken with properties neighbouring a proposed development and queried whether those properties with a diagonal view of a proposed development were consulted.
- In response it was stated that properties with shared boundaries to a proposed development were consulted and additional consultations were carried out at the discretion of the planning officer. Notifications of development applications were placed on site and advertised in the local press allowing for further objections to be submitted.
- It was noted that, under the proposals, councillors were advised to engage with the planning team in relation to any concerns related to a development application. In those circumstances officers would provide the councillor with

further details of the proposal and inform them about whether the application would be supported or refused.

- Members were supportive of the proposal that householder applications would be decided by officers and that the number of objections triggering consideration of a development application by an Area Committee would rise from four to six.
- Members noted that Area Committees retained the right to call-in development applications.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Area Committees

Heatons & Reddish Area Committee – 4 March 2024

- It was noted that the proposed changes had increased the threshold for Area Committee determination from four to six representations contrary to the officer recommendation and the reason for this was to reduce costs to the Authority and improve performance around the delivery of planning decisions.
- Members queried where the delays currently were in the system and why some applications were taking longer to determine than the Government targets.
- It was commented that, under the proposed changes, the Area Committee would continue to have oversight of significant applications and applications that were of local importance to residents.
- It was queried whether multiple objections received from the same household would be considered as one objection or multiple.
- In response, it was confirmed that objections from the same household would be treated a single objection, however if letters of objection and support were received for the same household they would be treated as separate responses.
- Members requested that clarification around objections from the same household be considered.
- It was noted that all householder planning applications would be fully delegated to officers for determination under the proposed changes.
- It was commented that whilst the call-in threshold had been increased to a minimum of two Members, it was felt that this would not have a significant impact on this Area Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Werneth Area Committee – 4 March 2024

- Members commented that the proposed increase in the number of objections which triggered Area Committee determination of a development application, from four to six, was a proportionate change.
- In circumstances where an amendment to a development application led to the rescinding of objections, and where the final number of objections was fewer than six, the application would not be considered by Area Committee.
- Members commented that the Constitution Working Party had given consideration to the amended guidance issued by central government which had

led to the proposed amendments to the scheme of delegation and planning protocol.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Cheadle Area Committee – 5 March 2024

RESOLVED – That the Council be recommended to approve the proposed changes to the constitution and planning protocol.

Stepping Hill Area Committee – 5 March 2024

- It was reported that, under the proposals, householder planning applications would be fully delegated to officers, irrespective of the number of objections to the application.
- Under the proposals, householder applications would not be subject to call-in. Where concerns were raised by residents to a councillor in respect of a householder application, councillors would have the option to raise those directly with the officer. There would be no option for a site visit for householder applications.
- Development applications would be considered by an Area Committee where the council had received six or more representations which did not accord with the officer recommendation, or which had been called-in by two or more councillors.
- Members commented on the potential risk that decision-making for applications not determined in a public forum might be perceived to lack transparency.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Marple Area Committee – 5 March 2024

- A catalyst for the proposed changes was the reduction in the determination period for applications introduced as part of the planning guarantee.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the proposed arrangements for calling-up applications to committee for consideration with specific regard to the increase in the number of members that would be required to trigger a call-up, and by the new requirements on the part of the member which included the completion of a form and the inclusion of reasons for the call-up.
- A comment was made in relation to the full delegation of householder applications and whether it was proportionate that these could never be considered at a committee level regardless of the level of objection that had been submitted against the proposal.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Bramhall & Cheadle Hulme South Area Committee – 7 March 2024

- It was commented that as Area Committees would be relinquishing their involvement in household planning applications, Members would like to see management information statistics on the number and nature of applications received and how they were currently processed.

- Members highlighted concerns regarding all residents that may be affected by a planning application being sufficiently notified. It was commented that more action could be taken to raise awareness and give residents the opportunity to comment, as the proposed changes would impact the number of objections required to bring an application before the Area Committee.
- In response, it was commented that the changes related specifically to scheme of delegation, rather than the notification process, however the comments from the Area Committee would be passed to Senior Managers in the team.
- Concerns were raised in relation to the increase in the call-in threshold which would require a minimum of two Members under the proposed changes, particularly in wards where all Members were not from the same political party.
- It was commented that Members could not always provide good planning reasons for the call-up of an application having not had a sufficient level of training. Furthermore, it was highlighted that good planning reasons could take a variety of forms and should not require the Member to reference the relevant elements of the policy.
- In response, it was stated that further and more detailed training for Members would be considered.
- It was commented that any changes should reflect subsidiarity and must always bring decisions as close to residents as possible at the most local level.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Central Stockport Area Committee – 7 March 2024

- It was noted that the matter had been the subject of some debate at the Constitution Working Party.
- It was commented that with regard to those three developments applications on the agenda for this meeting of the area committee, one of them would have been dealt with under delegated powers by officers under these proposals, as it did not have the six letters of objections to have triggered consideration by an area committee level.

RESOLVED – That the Council be recommended to approve the proposed changes to the constitution and planning protocol.