

Report to Planning Committee

Subject: Planning Committee Protocol

Date: 9th September 2026

Author: Assistant Director - Development

Purpose For Planning Committee Members to approve the Planning Committee Protocol.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

That Planning Committee approve the amended Planning Committee Protocol.

1 Background

- 1.1 Section 10 of the Constitution sets out the rules for Planning Committee with sub-section 8 setting out the Code of Practice for Councillors in Dealing with Planning Applications. This code is supported by the Planning Committee Protocol which accompanies the Planning Committee Agenda for each meeting.
- 1.2 One of the main purposes of the planning system is to manage development in the public interest. In performing this role, planning necessarily affects land and property interests, particularly the financial value of landholdings and the quality of their settings. It is important, therefore, that the Local Planning Authority, both Planning Officers and the Planning Committee, make, planning decisions affecting these interests openly, impartially, with sound judgement and for justifiable reasons. The process should leave no grounds for suggesting that a decision has been partial, biased or not well founded in any way.
- 1.3 Planning decision making is a process of informed judgement taken within

a defined policy context. Decisions can be highly controversial due to their capacity to affect amenity and well-being as well as land and property interests, more so because the system invites public opinion as part of the decision-making process. It is important, therefore, that the planning processes at the Council are characterised by open and transparent decision-making.

- 1.4 The Localism Act 2011 sets out a duty for each local authority to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors and to adopt a local code of conduct. The purpose of the protocol is to provide more detailed guidance on the application of the Code of Practice set out within the Constitution.

Working Group

- 1.5 At its meeting on 15th July 2026, Planning Committee approved the establishment of a politically balanced Working Group to:
 - (a) review and update the Planning Committee Protocol;
 - (b) consider the amendments required to Section 10 and Section 19b of the Constitution; and
 - (c) consider those matters left to local determination under the Regulations.
- 1.6 The Working Group met on 6 August 2026 and was attended by Members together with Officers from Planning, Legal and Democratic Services. Extensive discussion took place and Members provided valuable comments and feedback on the proposed amendments.
- 1.7 Officers subsequently reviewed all comments received and prepared revised drafts of the Planning Committee Protocol, Section 10 and Section 19b. Those revised drafts were circulated to the Working Group Members for further review and comment by 5pm on 17 August 2026.
- 1.8 Final comments were considered by Officers and the documents were subsequently finalised. The Protocol appended to this report represent the final Officer recommendation.
- 1.9 Whilst broad agreement was reached on the revised Protocol, no clear consensus emerged on all issues. In those circumstances, Officers were

required to exercise professional judgement in formulating the final recommendations contained within the appended documents.

2 Proposal

2.1 That Planning Committee Members approve the proposed amendments to the Planning Committee Protocol

The key changes proposed can be summarised as follows;

Revised Planning Committee Protocol (Appendix 1)

2.2 Public Speaking

The speaking time for each category of speaker has been increased to four minutes per category.

Categories of Speaker and Order of Speaking

The draft Protocol provides separate speaking opportunities for:

- the applicant or their agent;
- Ward Councillors and Parish Councillors;
- those speaking in support; and
- those speaking in objection.

2.3 Allowing Ward Members and Parish Councils to speak at Planning Committee would create a more inclusive and democratic decision-making process. The participation of Ward Members and Parish Councils will allow the Committee to better understand the perspective of the community in respect of the proposal being considered, ensuring that the Committee decision has regard to the views of the residents of an area and not only those who have registered to speak at the Committee meeting.

2.4 The Protocol sets out that the consideration of each application shall proceed in the following order:

- the Planning Officer shall introduce and present the application;
- the applicant or their agent;
- any Parish Councillor or Ward Councillor who has registered to speak;
- those registered to speak in support of the application; and
- those registered to speak in objection to the application.
- Committee Members Speaking on Applications

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Any proposed amendments the proposals for the Planning Committee Protocol can be proposed to and debated by Council on 30th September.
- 3.2 The existing Protocol could be retained but this does not allow the agent of the applicant, Ward Members or Parish Councils to speak at the Committee. It is considered that the proposed Protocol allows greater involvement and transparency.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None, the changes required to the Planning Committee Protocol have been met from existing budgets.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council's Code of Practice in Section 10 of the Constitution is supplemented by the Planning Committee Protocol is consistent with the Local Government Association's guidance on Probity in Planning and seek to ensure that decisions on planning applications are undertaken, on behalf of communities, in a fair, impartial and transparent way.

6 Local Government Reorganisation Implications

- 6.1 None. Each Local Planning each has its own Constitution and Planning Committee Protocol to ensure the proper consideration and determination of planning applications. It will be for the newly formed unitary authorities to adopt their own Constitutions following Local Government Reorganisation.

7 Equalities Implications

- 7.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

8 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 None, any carbon reduction and sustainability implications will be considered in the determination of individual planning applications by both

the Local Planning Authority and Secretary of State should they decide to call in an application.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 - Revised Planning Committee Protocol

10 Background Papers

10.1 Local Government Association - Probity in planning: Advice for councillors and officers making planning decisions <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/probity-planning-advice-councillors-and-officers-making-planning-decisions>

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer