

## **PLANNING WEEKLY LIST ARRANGEMENTS**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Following a decision at the Planning Services Committee meeting on the 21 November 2002, this report provides an update on the arrangements for dealing with items referred from the Weekly List.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Weekly List was introduced about 12 years ago as a mechanism for dealing with non-controversial planning applications that would normally be determined at the Planning Committee, to enable a greater number of applications to be determined within the statutory timescales and to improve the level of service to customers.
- 2.2 The procedure continues to work very successfully, but concern has been raised about the short gap between the referral of items and their consideration at a Committee on the Thursday evening in the same week.

### **3 ARRANGEMENTS EXPLAINED**

- 3.1 The Weekly List is despatched to Members in each Thursday's drop and Members then have until lunchtime on the following Tuesday to decide whether any of the items should be referred for consideration at the next Committee.
- 3.2 Where items are referred to Committee more than two weeks in advance of the meeting date, reports are included in the Planning Schedule.
- 3.3 In cases where an item is referred from the Weekly List in the week preceding the Committee, a Supplementary Schedule item will be delivered to Members in the Thursday drop, that is one week before the meeting.
- 3.4 However, when an item is referred on the Tuesday of the meeting week, it is not possible for a report to be sent to Members in advance of the meeting. Incidentally, in order to comply with the 5 day rule for public deposit of reports to be considered at Committee, the Weekly List in the week of the Committee is actually placed on deposit on Wednesday afternoon, although it continues to be sent to Members in the Thursday drop.

**4 DISCUSSION**

- 4.1 The key issue of concern for Members is the limited time available to consider the content of items referred from the Weekly list in the week of the Planning Committee. It is interesting to note that the number of items referred in the week of the Committee is actually very small (4 in 2000, 2 in 2001, and 3 so far this year).
- 4.2 It is often the case that items placed on the Weekly List, if not referred, are likely to be determined within the statutory time period. There is no doubt that if referrals are reported to the next available Committee, there is more chance the decision will be taken within the statutory period and this is certainly likely to be the case for items referred in the week of the Committee. If an item referred in the week of a Committee is not reported to that Committee, then it will certainly go out of time if it is required to wait for five weeks until the next Committee date.
- 4.3 The timely determination of planning applications is a key element of customer service and one of the reasons for the introduction of the Weekly List. Therefore, it is considered to be important for applications referred in the week of a Committee to be determined at that Committee, rather than waiting a further period weeks for a decision.
- 4.4 That having been said, there is no doubt that Members may read Weekly List items from a slightly different perspective to items included in the Planning Schedule, where there is an expectation of discussion in the Committee. If an item is referred in the week of the Committee, it will have satisfied the 5-day deposit requirement.
- 4.5 Referred items in the week of the Committee are actually rare and they can be circulated to Members in one of two ways; either in the Thursday drop or, alternatively, they can be handed round on the night of the meeting. Circulating any items on the night of the meeting ensures that all Members have a copy of the report, and this has tended to be the approach followed in the past.
- 4.6 It is concluded that, in order to maintain customer service, the current arrangements for circulating referred items from the Weekly List in the week of a Planning Committee should continue with items being circulated to Members prior to the start of the meeting. The above arrangements would operate on the basis that the preferred day for Planning Committee continued to be a Thursday. On rare occasions, the Planning Committee meets on a Tuesday or Wednesday. In these cases, the Weekly List would not have been on public deposit for the required period of 5 days and therefore, referred items would inevitably

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have to be carried four weeks forward to the next meeting of the committee.

- 4.7 The Agenda for Planning Services Committee will contain a standing item to the effect that it includes “matters referred by Members from the Weekly List dated (the Wednesday before the week of the Committee) which will be available for public inspection from that date.

**5 RECOMMENDATION**

That, subject to Members' comments, the current arrangements for dealing with items referred from the Weekly List to Planning Committee is re-affirmed. (HPS).

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**Background Papers:**

None.

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