

Date: 29 January 2008

Report: PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Purpose of the report

1. To seek Members' views on a clarification of the scheme for Public Speaking at Planning Committee.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

- **Best Value Performance Plan objectives**

Improve the efficiency of the service, so that: 65% of minor applications & 80% of other applications are being determined within eight weeks by march 2007, and at least 98% of standard decision notices are issued within two working days of decisions.

Background

3. Members of the public have an opportunity to ask questions or make statements at meetings of the National Park Authority and at its Committees and Sub-Committees.
4. In addition to this, the Planning Committee has a separate scheme for public participation. This allows applicants and other interested individuals to address the Committee prior to it making a decision on an application.
5. At the January meeting of the Planning Committee, a public speaker was allowed on a referred case, on the basis of legal advice that, as worded, the public speaking scheme did not specifically exclude this. Members requested clarification of the public speaking scheme.
6. In practise, public speaking has been limited to applications on the plans list, not applications that have been referred back.
7. This is logical in that at the 'plans list' stage all material considerations are open for discussion, which fits well with public contributions. However, at the reference back stage the committee may only be considering one specific reason to refuse or to

approve. Applications at the reference back stage have been thoroughly debated at an earlier meeting and debate is normally brief and focussed.

8. If this situation is not addressed, we may find increasing numbers of applicants and objectors taking advantage of it to have their views repeated on each occasion that the case in which they are interested comes forward.
9. Through its Best Value Performance Plan Objectives, and the work of the Planning Performance Working Group & Planning Champion, the Authority has committed itself to improving the efficiency with which the Planning Committee runs. Neither the efficient running of the Committee, nor its understanding of the merits of cases would be helped by such repetition.

RECOMMENDATION

10. That the scheme for Public Speaking at Planning Committee, be amended to exclude speaking on cases other than those applications on the plans list.

Peter Watson
Head of Planning

11 January 2008

Background documents:

Scheme for Public Speaking at Planning Committee.