

PLANNING COMMITTEE

6th NOVEMBER 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

PLANNING COMMITTEE - CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the customer feedback received and to consider whether any changes in procedure or practice are necessary.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **(i) Members note the comments, and;
(ii) Consider the use of “house rules” notes to be distributed at each meeting and the use of alternative methods of gaining feedback.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 At the 13th March 2014 meeting of the Planning Committee Members resolved to use questionnaires to gather feedback from participants in committee meetings. It was agreed that the questionnaires would be used for six meetings and that the feedback would be assessed to see whether it could be used, if necessary, to help shape improvements. The questionnaire asked for participants' comments on the whole process from initial notification, not just their views on the meeting itself.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

3.2 The level of response has been disappointing with only twelve completed questionnaires returned.

3.3 In summary, most of the customers are satisfied with both the notification procedure and the operation of and conduct at the Committee meetings. There are general responses which are summarised below together with a few specific comments to note.

Notification of committee meeting ,time and venue

3.4 Customers were generally satisfied with these arrangements, with the majority (7) stating that it was good,1 excellent,3 fair and 1 poor The final respondent was frustrated because they were unable to find details of an application on the website. Since the date of that comment the website has been improved and that process is now easier with more information provided.

3.5 All customers were satisfied with the venue and time of the Committee meetings, except for two respondents who considered that it was too early for people who have been to work. This is noted, but no changes are proposed.

The Committee meeting

3.6 Overall, most customers (7) rated the meetings as good, with 3 excellent and 2 fair.

General operation – stewardship, sound system and use of screen

3.7 A number of customers made comments about the stewardship of the meetings and the effectiveness of the sound system. There was also one comment about the screen.

- 3.8 The comments about the steward were when there was an exceptionally large number in the chamber interested in a wind turbine application. A few people felt that the steward was over zealous and out that he could have been calmer in his control of the room. There are a few meetings in the year where the level of public interest and attendance is high and occasionally it is necessary for the steward to maintain order, sometimes quite firmly and often with the support of the Chairman. This is not considered to be a significant issue.
- 3.9 One useful suggestion on this point and the general conduct of the meeting was that cards could be distributed in the public area, explaining the “house rules” so that everyone knew how the meeting would proceed and the conduct and roles of the various parties.
- 3.10 While there was general satisfaction (11 responses) with the sound system, there were three comments that speakers could not be heard. This seems to be because they were either quietly spoken or too far from the microphone. This can be addressed by reminding all speakers to speak clearly and loudly.
- 3.11 One customer complained that they were unable to clearly see the slides on the screen because their view was obstructed by officers’ and Members’ heads. The use of the second screen at the side of the chamber is being explored to help provide as many people as possible with a clear view of the officers’ presentations.

Conduct at the meeting – Roles, conduct and knowledge

- 3.12 One customer suggested that it would be helpful if Members and officers were introduced at the start of the meeting as their name plates are too small to read. Noted, although the Chairman does usually introduce the participants. These details could be added to a “house rules” card if this was introduced to provide general guidance on procedure, protocol and the roles of all participants.
- 3.13 Two customers expressed concern that some Members appeared to be having private conversations, rather than listening to speakers.
- 3.14 One customer considered that Members would benefit from increased knowledge of specific technical matters, in particular the issues relating to wind turbines. Members regularly attend training sessions and the material considerations relevant to all applications are always taken in to account when this Committee determines applications. Comments are noted and the need to keep up to date with the issues relating to specific types of development will be taken account of in future training .

Public Speaking

- 3.15 Most of the customers who commented on public speaking found it straightforward. They made three suggestions for improvement. These are circulating speakers’ notes to Members; increasing the length of speaking time from 3 minutes and circulating the list of public speakers to everyone at the meeting.
- 3.16 It is not considered necessary to expect speakers to produce notes to be circulated to Members. Public speakers should only be reiterating points which have already been raised in their written comments which are already available, not introducing new material.
- 3.17 The request to increase the time for speakers is noted and can be considered when Members next review this procedure.
- 3.18 The list of speakers is already circulated. Officers will ensure that the details are always made available to everyone at the meeting.

CONCLUSION

3.19 The limited response from customers is summarised above. It indicates reasonable satisfaction with the arrangement and operation of Planning Committee meetings. There are a few points which are highlighted and noted in the commentary above. The only specific action which is recommended to be considered by Members is that "house rules " cards could be produced and circulated at all meetings to help explain protocols, procedures and roles at Planning Committee. Similar information could also be published on the website.

Due to the limited response Members may also want to consider whether other means of collecting customer feedback, such as sending a shorter questionnaire by email directly to participants immediately after the meeting, would be worthwhile.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None of the suggested operational changes would have any policy or corporate implications.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial or other resource implications. Although it should be noted that improper decisions may be open to challenge with possible associated financial costs.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 There are no legal implications but note that improper decisions may be open to challenge.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.2 There are no community safety issues arising directly from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 There are no equalities issues arising directly from this report.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 There are no specific risks associated with this report.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change issues arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 This report has not been subject to any consultation.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 Decisions made by Planning Committee affect all wards.

Contact Officer P Reid

Date: 30 October 2014

Background Papers: Customer Feedback Questionnaires

