



HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLANNING & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE 14 September 2023

MINUTES OF MEETING

PRESENT: Cllrs Polly Andrews, Elizabeth Foxton, Jeremy Milln, Rob Owens, Sam Potts and Dan Powell

ATTENDING: Becci O'Reilly, Administration & Events Manager and Planning Committee Clerk, Steve Kerry, Town Clerk (part)

P2023/24.32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Sue Boulter and Debbie Hobbs.

P2023/24.33 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Rob Owens substituted for Cllr Hobbs.

P2023/24.34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

P2023/24.35 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillors agreed that the Minutes and Draft Responses of the Meeting of 17 August 2023 were an accurate record with the amends that Cllrs Potts and Powell had given apologies to the Town Clerk.

P2023/24.36 COMMITTEE ROLE AND REMIT

The Clerk explained the evolution of the processing of planning applications. Years ago, every application arrived in hard copy with huge numbers of drawings that were passed around the table. This often led to very confusing meetings and people getting lost as to which drawing on which application a colleague was referring to. Then all papers were sent electronically and we set up the means to view them together. Then it was noted that a lot of applications are non-controversial. They have received no local objections and were being passed without comment after brief consideration. Then it was decided that the officer clerking the meeting would "green flag" those applications and the Chair would suggest they should be disposed of in a single decision. This was the current practice.

This means that the officer is loading all the applications up for every agenda and then suggesting that members did not need to spend any time on a high proportion of those items. The green flagging had been successful and it was very rare for an item so identified to be the subject of a lengthy debate or an objection. Was this process efficient? It is estimated that it

took about two or three days to load up all these applications and this was largely wasted effort. It was also noted that while planning applications occur in every ward most members who are not on the Planning Committee only engage with them when there were local objections and members of the public got into contact with them.

The Clerk suggested that in future every member of the City Council would be asked to scan planning applications on the Herefordshire Council Planning Portal on their website, using a ward filter and “current applications” to focus on the current business within their ward. If they felt an application was controversial or needed to be commented on, they would email the officer supporting the Planning Committee and it would be placed on the agenda, and the papers uploaded for presentation. This would do two things; it would enable all city councillors to have a representative role on planning issues improving their engagement with their communities and it would reduce the workload of officers and focus it on those matters which the committee needed to review.

Members felt this was the logical next step in streamlining the processes of the committee. In discussion it was noted that where there are two members in a ward, Hinton and Hunderton and Newton Farm, the members might agree that one of them would lead on planning or they might both raise issues of concern. A reference by either member to a planning application would be sufficient to place it on the agenda. Where a member was not on Planning Committee it would be helpful if they added a brief note as to why it was thought worthy of detailed review, perhaps referring local objections or approaches to them by residents. Members should always encourage members of the public to add their objections to the Herefordshire website directly as numbers do matter in the consideration of applications.

Finally, it was noted that ward members for Racecourse and Victoria Park would find their applications listed under Holmer and Shelwick Ward so would have to identify those that were within the City boundary by street name. This is because of the Boundary Commission’s odd decision to allocate those wards to a rural county ward even though they are part of the city parish and Herefordshire South constituency. This anomaly had been raised at the time of the boundary review but to no avail and it could not be changed now.

It was proposed by Cllr Andrews, seconded by Cllr Powell and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Committee moves to a process of considering applications on a called in basis; all other applications to be passed automatically by officers as no comment.

That all members of the City Council are asked to scan Herefordshire Council’s Planning Portal and to identify to the Clerk or the Administration and Events Manager any items they wish the committee to consider.

That the Committee considers all applications identified by local members as being of concern.

That the delegated power to officers to deal quickly with most applications as amended is retained and all most applications where officers have objected be reported to the Committee for ratification or withdrawal as the members shall decide.

P2023/24.37 DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBERS

It was

RESOLVED that the participation of those City Councillors who are also members of the County of Herefordshire District Council in both the debate and any subsequent vote on matters contained in this agenda is on the basis that the views expressed are preliminary views taking account of the information currently available to the City Council and that District Councillors reserve their final views on all applications until they are in full possession of all relevant information both for and against.

P2023/24.38 POLICY ISSUES

None.

P2023/24.39 APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

For further information on the outcome of planning application decisions, please see the 'Draft Responses' item corresponding to this meeting. It was

RESOLVED to submit planning application decisions to Herefordshire Council.

P2023/24.40 CORRESPONDENCE

None.

P2023/24.41 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 12 October 2023 at 6pm.

There being no other business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.05pm

Signed

Date