

## **Item 5(f) – Development Services Review**

### **Cabinet's Recommendation to Council**

At its meeting on 28 October 2010 the Cabinet considered the matter as follows:

The Head of Development Services brought Members' attention to the improved times for determining planning applications. He stated that this was part of a range of greater efficiencies and improvements in Development Services, including a reduction in spending on external consultants.

The Head of Development Services informed Members that input had been received from a range of sources. He stated that views included Local Members wanting more flexibility to speak, customers being concerned by the time taken to decide applications, praise from agents for the new website and staff believing there had been an overall improvement in Member/Officer relations.

The Head of Development Services particularly highlighted the changes being proposed to notification to speak and to Appendix N.

The Chairman suggested that the total Development Control process was almost unrecognisable because of the reforms and improvements already made.

The Portfolio Holder for Safe Community raised a concern regarding the Development Control Committee meeting on 22 July 2010 where she had been unable to speak. She felt that training should be compulsory for all Members of the Committee, not just new Members. She also suggested that the Question Time was being abused by some Members using this time to make a point rather than ask a question. She suggested that if no improvement had been made in a year then more action and restrictions on debate should be made.

The Chairman expressed his concerns about the length of meetings. However, Members agreed that the Development Control Committee was working better than before.

In response to a question, the Chairman stated that spending on Development Control had been reduced and suggested that past increases would be more of a concern if there had not also been improvements in performance.

A Member, who was not on Cabinet, felt that the wording in Appendix J relating to speaker registration should be amended, to reflect that only Local Members who were not on the Committee needed to register to speak. It was agreed that the Member would discuss the wording with the Head of Development Services.

Resolved:

- (a) That the updated Action Plan at Appendix A be approved.
- (b) That the Council be recommended to amend the Constitution as set out in Appendix J to the report.**
- (c) That the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Development Services, with officers' support, review Appendix N and its wording, and report to Cabinet in July 2011.

*The recommendation highlighted in bold is for consideration by the Council.*