



Leicester
City Council

**MINUTE
EXTRACT**

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2006 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor A. Vincent- Chair
Councillor Kitterick- Labour Spokesperson
Councillor Porter-Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Corrall
(for Cllr Thomas)
Councillor Renold

Councillor Garrity
(for Cllr. Henry)
Councillor Waddington)

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98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda, and/ or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Cllr. Garrity declared a personal interest in report D, 'Planning Application Statistics' as she was Chair of the Development Control Committee.

106. PLANNING APPLICATION STATISTICS

The Service Director, Environment submitted a report that contained planning application statistics for the October to December 2005 quarter and a statistical release from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

A member of the Committee noted that the Planning Advisory Service had assessed the Council's planning service. They had recommended greater resources for the planning service, but it was felt that despite extra resources being provided in one part of the recent Council budget, in other ways resources were being removed. It was felt that this would deter efforts to meet government targets and receive high levels of planning delivery grant.

Other members of the Committee stated that they wished to express their concerns to Cabinet about the potential deterioration in performance of the planning service that could result from the cuts to the department and the impression that this would give to the development community with regard to the Council's ability to process major planning applications. They also

requested that an action plan be developed addressing this situation.

Officers commented that an action plan had been produced and would be reported to the Committee in due course.

It was also proposed in the Planning Advisory Service report that the name, Development Control Committee be changed to Development Management. Officers didn't have a problem with doing this.

Members of the Committee gave consideration to the effects of the current operating procedures in the planning service. They expected to see more appeals, which the Council was in danger of losing. More appeals will have workload consequences at a time when staff numbers within the service were being reduced as a result of the budget cuts.

The Committee felt that greater work with developers at the pre-application stage would help speed the planning process up to some extent. It was noted that plans to charge for pre-application advice may hinder this process.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Cabinet be asked to re-consider the name of the Development Control Committee, possibly to include the word 'Planning';
- (2) that Cabinet be requested to consider this report and give consideration to the concerns of the Committee, with regard to the potential deteriorating performance in the planning service which could result from the budget cuts;
- (3) that that Committee asks for a report back on the Action Plan to improve the performance of the planning service;
- (4) that the Committee would like the use of pre-planning discussions promoted if they proved useful;
- (5) that the Committee requests to see statistics on comparator cities with regard to their planning services.