

Report of the Monitoring Officer

Planning Panels

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents Members with information about the Planning Panels who act as consultees to planning applications in the non-parished central part of the Council's area.

2. Background

- 2.1 Parish Councils are required by law to be consulted on planning applications in their area. For very many years the Council has operated a system in those parts of the City not covered by a Parish Council whereby a Panel is appointed through each Ward Committee to be consulted on applications within the Ward. A fact sheet providing more information about the role of panels is annexed to this report.
- 2.2 The use of planning panels does give rise to some potential ethical standards issues. The potential exists for a planning panel member to comment on an application which directly affects him or her or those with whom he or she is closely associated. That same potential exists, of course, where a parish council is consulted on an application. However, parish councillors are subject to the standards regime under the Localism Act 2011 whereas planning panel members are not. A parish councillor who commented on his or her own planning application would risk prosecution. Commenting on the application of a neighbour, friend or relative may be less likely to amount to an offence but would breach any properly drafted code of conduct and risk investigation by the Joint Standards Committee. Neither of these sanctions exists for a planning panel member.
- 2.3 The fact sheet recognises the potential for conflicts of interest and says:

“Members of the panel shall declare any interest in a particular matter for noting prior to consideration of the relevant application”

Members of the Committee may have views as to whether they would wish to see this statement strengthened in any way.

- 2.4 The Head of Communities and Equalities, whose team supports Ward Committees and the Planning Panels, has indicated that there is an intention to offer planning panel members training alongside parish councillors on the planning system. There is an opportunity within that training to emphasise the need for consideration of conflicts of interest. Again the Committee may wish to make recommendations in relation to that training.

Recommendations

3. Members are recommended to:
- 1) Discuss the ethical standards issues which may arise in the context of planning panels and offer such guidance as they consider appropriate.

Reason: To support planning panel members in maintaining high ethical standards when advising the City Council.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**



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Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annex

Fact Sheet 12 - Ward Planning Panels