

## **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR PLANNING MATTERS - GUIDANCE SUMMARY**

*This code of conduct applies to all Members but particularly members of the Development Control Committee, their substitutes, and officers associated with planning cases.*

### **GENERAL**

- 1 The Development Control Committee (DCC) is a quasi-judicial body.
- 2 DCC members must therefore act totally impartially at all times from as soon as they first become acquainted with a planning application or potential planning application until the final decision is taken.
- 3 They must declare the nature and extent of any personal interest they have in any planning matter and must cease to be involved in any planning matter in which they have a prejudicial interest as soon as they realise that they have such an interest.
- 4 Insofar as possible DCC members should avoid contact with applicants, agents, objectors, and - in particular - decline all offers of gifts and hospitality. Before an application is made they should have an officer present if possible when meeting any of the above and keep a record of the meeting.
- 5 They should take their decisions in accordance with the Council's planning policies unless there are clear and compelling planning reasons for not doing so.
- 6 All Members must not disclose or use to their own advantage any confidential information.
- 7 Members of the DCC should not become associated in the public mind with any vested interest in planning matters.

### **OUTSIDE THE COMMITTEE BEFORE OR AFTER RECEIPT OF A PLANNING APPLICATION**

- 8 DCC members should not offer any opinion on a planning application until it has come to Committee and they are satisfied that they have all the relevant planning information.
- 9 This includes all applications arising within their wards - which should be handled by other councillors.
- 10 DCC members are advised not to allow themselves to be lobbied but, when they are, they must give equal time and opportunity to both applicant and objector.

- 11 DCC members should normally only meet applicants and objectors with a Council officer present.
- 12 All such contacts must be reported to the Head of Planning and Transportation.
- 13 All Members must not put pressure on any officer associated with planning matters in order to influence their recommendations on a particular application one way or the other (see 19 below)
- 14 All Members must follow the Council's guidelines on procedure at site visits.

#### IN COMMITTEE OR CABINET

- 15 Members must base their decisions only on material planning considerations. No others are permitted.
- 16 They must not speak or vote on any planning matter in which they have a prejudicial interest.
- 17 They must declare if they have any relevant information on a planning application or have been lobbied in respect of it.
- 18 They must list their planning reasons for any departure from the council's planning policies (see 5 above); and take a recorded vote on any such decision.

#### OFFICERS

- 19 Officers are required at all times to give objective, professional and non-political advice on all planning matters.
- 20 Additionally the guidelines above apply as appropriate to all officers associated with planning matters.

#### *Notes*

A **Personal** interest is a **registerable interest** OR something which affects a member's financial position or well-being - or that of their family, friends, job, business or other body(s) in which they have a **registerable** interest - more than it would affect other people in the Council's area.

A **Prejudicial** interest is a personal interest that might reasonably be perceived by others as so significant that it is likely to prejudice a member's judgement on the relevant application. Even if members believe that this is not the case, they must give over-riding weight to the perception that others will have of their actions.