

Report to Constitution Working Group

Date of meeting: 3 February 2022



**Epping Forest
District Council**

**Subject: Joint Meeting of Development Management Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen
Report by Councillor C C Pond**

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Working Group consider Councillor C C Pond's suggestion that other group members be added to the membership of this joint meeting;**
- (2) That if the majority group is worried about being outvoted, then such members could be there on a non-voting basis, solely to facilitate good governance of the consideration of planning applications; and**
- (3) That, subject to recommendations (1) and (2) above, a report be made to the Council recommending this amendment be incorporated in the Constitution.**

1. The joint meeting of the chairmen and vice-chairmen of planning committees is there to encourage smooth conduct of meetings, to troubleshoot problems that may have occurred, to consider new matters (e.g. of national policy) that have arisen, and generally to facilitate the process by which members consider those planning applications where delegated decision by officers is precluded.

2. Chairmen and deputies are appointed by the Annual Council Meeting entirely on political lines. The consideration of any planning application by Council or any of its committees should be conducted politics-blind. There should never be any whip exercised by any group on any planning application. Applications must be determined on the merits of that application, the relevant local plan, national legislation and guidance, by individual members using their own local knowledge and discretion.

3. If this committee of chairmen and vice-chairmen is composed solely of the representatives of one group, as this group has been for some time, then it is likely its members will not be aware of all the issues relevant to its remit.

4. Councillor C C Pond's suggestion is that other group members be added to the membership. If the majority group is worried about being outvoted, then such members could be there on a non-voting basis. Their presence would be solely to facilitate good governance of the consideration of planning applications.

5. This could be incorporated into the Constitution when the Leader makes the appointments to committees at Annual Council, under Article 4 – The Full Council 1 (i) Appointments to Committees and Sub-Committees (including Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen) by recommendation of the Appointments Panel (if required) except those relating to Executive functions which are the responsibility of the Leader of Council and those delegated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Article 4 is attached for information, as Appendix 1.

6. The Working Group is asked to consider this proposal and the recommendations.

Resource Implications:

The recommendations of this report seek to ensure that the Council's Constitution remains fit for purpose.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council's Constitution sets out procedures and rules for the operation of its functions and responsibilities.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the corporate Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues within the district.

Consultation Undertaken:

The proposed revision has been subject to consultation with the Monitoring Officer.

Background Papers:

None

Risk Management:

The Council's Constitution sets out procedures and rules for the operation of its functions and responsibilities.

Equality:

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.