

Questions from members of the public

There were two questions submitted by members of the public.

1. The question submitted by Mr Tim House:

“What formal and informal powers does this Committee have to scrutinise (or direct the scrutiny of) the performance of Executive Heads, their departments or their Officers, if Committee members become concerned that decisions are being taken by a Head, their Department or their Officers for political or other inappropriate reasons and are not in line with the legitimate expectations of Councillors and/or residents?”

Do the Committee members currently have any such concerns relating to any Executive Head, their Department or their Officers?”

2. South Farnham Residents Association together with the Badshot Lea Community Association submitted two questions for the Committee, relating to agenda items 10 and 11:

Relating to item 10 - Statement of Community Involvement

“The current Waverley Statement of Community Involvement dated 2019 states the following:

11.8. Pre application consultation should provide all groups, statutory and non-statutory, and specialist interest groups, with an opportunity to participate in the development of proposals. It gives local people a chance to comment when there is still an opportunity to influence the proposal.

11.10. When applicants have undertaken community consultation, it is advisable to include a full Statement of Community Involvement in the planning application submission. This will allow the Council to understand how the community and other stakeholders have been involved and how the feedback from this consultation has been incorporated into the application proposals.

The policies covering this have existed for some time, but in our view have never been properly applied.

The initial actions of our officers are crucial when applied to larger planning applications particularly when it comes to the Outline Scheme and the ensuing Reserved Matters.

Residents would like to be able to assist our officers and provide meaningful discussions to achieve the best outcome for the developer and local

people. Many applicants will avoid any consultation for fear of lack of co-operation leading to more time delay and appeals.

The difference is partly explained by whether the application site is within the Neighbourhood Plan or not.

If a site is identified within the Plan, it means there is general agreement that development should occur and we would like to discuss the details to ensure the best outcome for all.

Sites not in a Neighbourhood Plan can be very contentious, but local knowledge from a good source by early engagement with the Case Officer helps residents to understand what is proposed and is crucial at the Reserved Matters stage when it comes to the Design and Layout.”

Questions for item 10:

1. “When is the first opportunity for recognised Residents Associations to get involved and how can the Officers help us achieve that?”
2. “How can recognised Residents Associations achieve the earliest engagement with the Officers and Developers prior to the application being logged, particularly for Reserved Matters Applications?”

Item 11 - Revised National Planning Policy Framework and its implications for WBC

“The following quotes from the new NPPF.

NPPF Paragraph 39.

Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre- application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.

NPPF Paragraph 40.

Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.”

Question for item 11

“As our Local Plan is to be reviewed, we would like assurance that Waverley Borough Council will strengthen and update the Statement of Community Involvement and encourage the Planning Department to apply the principles as laid out in the NPPF for future planning applications?”