

COUNCIL

17 NOVEMBER 2015

ITEM 6 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR J LEGRYS TO COUNCILLOR T J PENDLETON

As Shadow Planning Lead, I have regular briefings with the Director of Services. I understand that the Portfolio Holder is considering a review of this Council's Planning Committee process.

Will the Portfolio Holder consider a short all-Member 'Task and Finish' Group with the remit of examining exemplars of best practice in other Planning Authorities and the aim of producing for Members, the public and objectors an accessible, open and transparent explanation of the planning process?

RESPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR T J PENDLETON

I can assure the Council that I take my responsibilities as Cabinet Member for planning and regeneration extremely seriously, and work tirelessly with officers and others to improve the services that I am responsible for delivering.

The Planning department, according to its measurable indicators such as determining applications on time, continues to get better, and I am pleased to say it continues to meet all of its targets. It is right however, that I and officers now focus on improving how we deliver this high performing service to make it more transparent, predictable and accessible.

As well as meeting all of our targets for determining planning applications on time, I am proud to say that customer satisfaction is also consistently high at 90%. This is especially good when you take into account that some people have their applications turned down. All of this has been achieved by hard work and dedication, and also of course focus.

I am not proposing a review of the committee process but like all aspects of the Council's services I am always looking for ways in which we can improve and in doing so will of course take on board good practice from elsewhere, which may involve visits to examine how others operate. However I see no reason why we would establish a formal task and finish group when that examination can be achieved through more informal routes.

I re-iterate however that going forward, openness, predictability of outcome, and ease of access by the public are non-negotiable requirements for this Council's Planning Committee.