

## Planning & Environment Committee

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| <b>Report Title:</b>    | <b>P&amp;E Terms of Reference</b>                                |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>    | <b>19 December 2023</b>  |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b> | <b>Lizzie Fuller, Committee Services &amp; Processes Officer</b> |

### Action Required

- To consider recommending to Full Council that the Travel Plan Working Group report into this committee.
- To note that a survey will be circulated to the committee to gather views on the function of the committee.
- To consider updating the committee's Terms of Reference regarding the process for calling applications in to SODC's committee.

### Background

1. Officers are working on reviewing all committee responsibilities/Terms of Reference. Three matters have been identified as needing reviewing:
  - a. The Travel Plan Working Group (TPWG)
  - b. The functions of the Planning & Environment Committee (P&E)
  - c. Call-in mechanisms.

### Travel Plan Working Group

2. The Travel Plan Working Group is currently the only active working group that reports into the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee (NPCC).
3. Whilst the future of the NPCC is under review and meetings are not required at present, the TPWG does not have a committee to ratify its decisions. To ensure the continuity of the TPWG and prevent any delays in its work, it is suggested that the TPWG reports into the P&E as and when required (this can be formally agreed by Full Council in January ahead of the next P&E). Sections 3 and 15 of P&E's existing Terms of Reference (below) would cover the work of the TPWG:
  - "Commenting on matters relating to parking, transport, the highway, traffic calming measures and other road safety matters."
  - "Making appropriate representations to any relevant agency in relation to the rights of way, footpath and cycle networks within the parish boundary."
4. This is likely to be a temporary solution whilst the committees are under review. It is hoped that any changes to the committee structure / terms of reference will be in place for the Annual Meeting in May 2024.

## Planning & Environment Committee Functions

5. It is likely that the reviewed / revised committee structure will retain a Planning committee of some form. To assist officers with understanding how Councillors would like the Planning & Environment Committee to function, a survey has been prepared and will be circulated after the meeting. If any Councillors have any suggestions for questions / comments on this, please be prepared to raise them at the meeting.

### Call in procedures

6. At present, any application\* where the Town Council's recommendation (usually an objection) is likely to be contrary to the District Council's Case Officer's recommendation, a request is made (by TTC's Officers) to Thame's District Councillors to call the application in to SODC's committee. There must be valid material planning reasons to call the application in, and SODC Cllrs can refuse to call an application in.

*(\*This excludes any application for 1 or more dwellings, commercial space of over 1,000 square metres, or any sites over a hectare in size, as these are automatically referred to SODC's planning committee if TTC's committee recommendation is contrary to SODC's officer's recommendation.)*

7. The current challenge is finding a volunteer Councillor, after TTC's meeting, to speak on the application. It is the responsibility of Councillors, not Officers, to speak on behalf of the committee's recommendation, although Officer's will provide Councillors with support in advance of the meeting.
8. There is a need to be clearer on which applications the committee actually want to be discussed at SODC's committee. It is creating additional workload for TTC and SODC where applications are called-in but no representative is there for TTC or it falls to TTC Officers to speak.
9. It is suggested that the Terms of Reference, section 4, be amended (see below) so that:
  - d. Applications are only called-in if the committee resolves to do so, after making their recommendation. In some cases, Officers have to request a call-in prior to the P&E meeting due to timeframes. The committee must at its meeting resolve whether to retain or withdraw this call-in.
  - e. P&E nominate, at the meeting where the recommendation is made, a Councillor who will call the application(s) in and speak on the application if/when it goes to committee. Essentially this Councillor becomes a champion for representing the committee's views on the relevant application(s).

| Existing  | Proposed  |
|---|---|
| 4. Representing the Town Council's views in respect of controversial planning applications by requesting that Thame's District Councillors call in the application and nominating a Town Councillor to attend the appropriate | 4. Representing the Town Council's views in respect of controversial planning applications by requesting, if resolved by the committee, that the application(s) be called in by Thame's District Councillors. In this case, the committee shall nominate a Councillor to make the |

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| South Oxfordshire District Council<br>Planning meeting. | call in request and to also attend the<br>appropriate South Oxfordshire District<br>Council Planning meeting. |
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### Resource Appraisal

10.No resource implications.

### Risk Assessment

11. There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations.

### Legal Powers:

- Local Government Act 1972 Sections 101-2

### Recommendation:

#### *It is recommended...*

- i) That the committee recommend to Full Council that the Travel Plan Working Group be approved to report into its committee, rather than the NPCC.*
- ii) To note that a survey will be sent to the committee to gather views on the function of the committee.*
- iii) To consider updating the committee's Terms of Reference, see paragraph 8.*