Planning Delegated Sub-Committee
17 April 2020

(9.30 - 10.06am)

Meeting held virtually and live streamed

Present:

Councillor: H Stephenson (Chair)
Councillors: D Cook, F Mendelson and K Robinson

In attendance:

K Lawless Assistant Director Planning
I Fairlamb Interim Assistant Director Planning
T Sunter Senior Planning Solicitor
J Softly Assistant Director Legal Service
B Joyce Democratic Services

Councillor Hazel Stephenson (Chair of Planning Committee) welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Planning Committee Delegated Sub-Committee, the first virtual meeting of the City Council under the new legislative regulations. She invited attendees to introduce themselves and explained the format of how the meeting would be conducted.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All members of Planning Delegated Sub-Committee present.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 DELEGATION OF PLANNING MATTERS

Submitted: Report of Assistant Director of Planning and Senior Planning Solicitor (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The purpose of the report was to allow the Assistant Director of Planning to determine planning applications which would ordinarily have been dealt by the Planning Committee due to the restrictions associated with the Coronavirus Pandemic. This would last until 17 October 2020 unless reviewed earlier.
Kath Lawless (Assistant Director Planning) introduced the report and advised that since close of business yesterday two letters of objection had been received from Councillor Cairns and Councillor Byrne (Monument Ward) and a further letter had been received from a member of the public. The letters expressed concerns regarding democratic oversight of planning decisions, stated that the planning system had to remain above reproach and that public confidence should not be undermined.

As such, it was proposed that the report recommendations be amended to ensure ward members were notified prior to any referral to the Assistant Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairs of Planning Committee. In this way ward member representations and any other representations would be considered at referral meetings. The amended recommendations are provided below.

**Recommendation**

The Planning Delegated Sub-Committee is recommended from 17 April until 17 October 2020, **unless reviewed earlier**, to:

(i) authorise the Assistant Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairs of Planning Committee, to decide whether the Assistant Director of Planning or Planning Committee shall determine any matter normally determined by Planning Committee, in accordance with paragraphs 6 - 8 above; **prior to any referral, ward councillors would be notified of the intention to seek authority to delegate the decision** and

(ii) approve the suspension of the Development Management Delegations – Guidance to Officers; and

(iii) subject to (i) above authorise the Assistant Director of Planning to determine any matters normally determined by Planning Committee (set out in Schedule 3A, Part 3.13 of the Newcastle Charter).

During discussion on the report the following points were noted.

- It was hoped that virtual meetings of Planning Committee would start in May. The IT Section was working to improve the online platform.
- Further discretion was needed to enable virtual meetings of Planning Committee to focus on important issues in a timely way. Referral meetings would decide which applications would be taken to Planning Committee.
- Every decision that would have gone to Planning Committee would have to go through the referral meeting process and each case would be determined on its merit.
- The intention to seek authority to delegate would be determined at referral meetings.
- The possibility of increasing the frequency of virtual Planning Committee meetings was raised. As there was a large amount of preparatory work on applications, reports and presentations the intention was to run the virtual
meetings on the same timetable – every three weeks. However, this would be kept under review.

- For purposes of transparency Planning Committee papers for virtual meetings would include a list of referrals and delegated decisions to keep all members informed.
- Declarations of interest would need to be taken into account at referral meetings and members would be expected to withdraw in the usual manner.
- A member of the Delegated Sub-Committee was happy to note that ward members would be notified of any applications in their wards.

The Vice Chairs of Planning Committee, Councillors Cook and Mendelson, moved and seconded the amended recommendations of the report.

RESOLVED - That Planning Delegated Sub-Committee unanimously agreed from 17 April until 17 October 2020, unless reviewed earlier, to:

(iv) authorise the Assistant Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairs of Planning Committee, to decide whether the Assistant Director of Planning or Planning Committee shall determine any matter normally determined by Planning Committee, in accordance with paragraphs 6 - 8 above; prior to any referral, ward councillors would be notified of the intention to seek authority to delegate the decision and

(v) approve the suspension of the Development Management Delegations – Guidance to Officers; and

(vi) subject to (i) above authorise the Assistant Director of Planning to determine any matters normally determined by Planning Committee (set out in Schedule 3A, Part 3.13 of the Newcastle Charter).