

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	22 January, 2013
DIRECTORS	Stewart Carruth and Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Notice of Motion from Councillor Jennifer Stewart – “That this Council considers the possibility of scheduling future meetings of the Development Management Sub Committee so as to avoid meetings being held in July, with a suggestion that meetings be held in late June and early August instead to assist with meeting performance indicators for dealing with planning applications”.
REPORT NUMBER:	CG/13/007

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is in response to Councillor Jennifer Stewart’s motion to this Committee on 6 November, 2012 about the scheduling of meetings of the Development Management Sub Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee agree to continue the practice of holding meetings of the Development Management Sub Committee in July in order to demonstrate sustained improvement in planning performance in terms of time taken to determine planning applications as required by the Scottish Government.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Government is currently considering a review of the planning application fee structure. Current proposals include an increase in fees but with a penalty clause included whereby planning authorities which fail to demonstrate improved performance will revert to the previous fee regime. It is therefore important that the Council continues to determine applications as quickly as possible. If the Council fails to demonstrate sustained improved performance it will be financially burdened by the amount of planning fees being reduced as a result. . It will also jeopardise potential future fee increases being considered by the Government which would ensure full cost recovery of the Development Management service.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 At its meeting of 6 November, 2012, this Committee agreed to receive a report at its next meeting on the following terms of a notice of motion by Councillor Jennifer Stewart which had been referred from the Council on 10 October, 2012 to this Committee:-

“That this Council considers the possibility of scheduling future meetings of the Development Management Sub Committee so as to avoid meetings being held in July, with a suggestion that meetings be held in late June and early August instead to assist with meeting performance indicators for dealing with planning applications”.

- 5.2 In terms of the Standing Orders of the Council (Standing Order 31(1)), the ordinary meetings of committees and sub-committees shall be held in accordance with a timetable drawn up and approved by the Council. Standing Order 40(2) explains that, although the period 1 July to 15 August in each year is classed as the “recess”, nothing in Standing Order 40 shall prevent the Licensing or the Planning Committee (or equivalent) meeting when necessary to deal with matters within their respective remits.
- 5.3 At its meeting of 16 May, 2012, the Council agreed the timetable for its meetings and meetings of its Committees and Sub Committees from July, 2012 to June, 2013. Detailed within the agreement was that a meeting of the Development Management Sub Committee would be held in the month of July 2012 as per the practice adopted by the Council for the last 5 years. This was unanimously agreed by the Council.
- 5.4 The reason for scheduling meetings of the Sub Committee in July stems from both the Government’s performance indicators relating to the speed at which planning applications are determined and Government’s current proposals for increasing planning fees whereby councils will revert to a reduced fee if there is no significant sustained improvement in performance (which includes the speed at which planning applications are determined by the Council).

5.5 Any decision to alter the scheduling of meetings of the Sub Committee (in order not to have a meeting in the month of July) would have to be balanced against the possibility that this would adversely affect the Council's performance indicators and future fee income. It is also important to determine planning applications expeditiously to facilitate economic development in the City and deliver the aspirations of the Structure Plan and Local Development Plan

5.6 The details of the motion suggest that meetings could be held in late June and early August. Another reason why the Sub Committee meets in July is to spread the number of meetings and the workload of the Sub Committee out evenly across the months of the year. The July 2012 meeting of the Sub Committee considered 21 applications, all of which would have been further delayed had the meeting not taken place until August.

5.7 In terms of the membership of the Sub Committee substitutes are permissible and should be used when required to cover for the possibility of members not being able to attend meetings of the Sub Committee.

6. IMPACT

Aberdeen - the Smarter City states "We will improve access to affordable housing in both the social rented and private sectors, by supporting first-time buyers, regenerating areas within the city and by working with developers to maximize the effective use of developer contributions."

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scottish Government Consultation Paper "The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 2012"

Aberdeen City Council's Standing Orders

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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