

<u>Concern</u>	<u>No of Members raised this issue</u>	<u>Officer response</u>
Members raised concern over being asked to provide a planning reason for referring an application to a Sub Area Planning Committee.	4	This requirement has been removed. Whilst considered best practice its removal does not undermine the proposed changes.
Can this be determined by Planning Committee? Or should it be determined by Full Council?	3	The Council's Constitution has delegated the responsibility for maintaining an effective system of development control to the Planning Committee.
Concern raised over the larger major applications going to Planning Committee and not being heard by the Sub Area Committee where residents can have their views represented.	2	The revised scheme will allow for public speaking at Planning Committee. Members can also substitute onto the planning committee at the agreement of a sitting Member. Members are also welcome to attend and speak at the Planning Committee to represent their residents views even if they are not a Member of the committee.
Questioning why the planning service was restructured and why two senior planners were made redundant if we are performing poorly.	1	The planning service was restructured to realign resources to provide more case officers and reduce the top-heavy management structure in the department. This has improved the efficiency, consistency and quality of the delegated decisions.
Objection to the following phrase in the officer's report " <i>the primary role of councillors when sitting on a planning committee is to take planning decisions based on the development plan and relevant material planning decisions. It is not to represent local community views</i> "	2	The wording in the original committee report and does not form part of the Scheme of Delegation.
The need to amend the size of the Planning Committee to ensure that all wards are represented on the Committee.	1	The size of the planning committee is agreed at the Annual Council Meeting following the elections in May. If elected the administration intends to increase the size of the planning committee in the next municipal year.

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Officers must guarantee to report back to the Planning Committee by the end of 2020 with some analysis of the previous 15 months or the positive and negative impacts of these changes. Reporting in Dec 2020 would allow sufficient time to amend, if necessary any parts of the process for the next municipal year.	1	Agreed.
Fully supportive of changes that mean applications won't be considered by both Sub Committee and the main committee.	1	Noted.
Fully supportive of the proposals.	1	Noted.
Concern that if all applications at committee are entitled to public speaking the meetings could be very long.	1	Public speaking is already permitted for applications with 10 or more objections. The increase in public speak from referred application is unlikely to be onerous. It will however ensure the residents voice is heard for all applications referred to a committee.
The proposed scheme of delegation should be put out for public consultation/concern raised over how the public will react.	2	Public consultation is not required to amend the Scheme of Delegation. However, the committee agenda and reports are available to the public ahead of the committee meetings, accessible on our website.
The figures comparing local authority achievements makes no attempt to report the resources needed to achieve these results, as such the statistics do not demonstrate anything about efficiency.	1	More officer time and resources are needed to prepare committee items compared to delegated decisions.  In 2017 a benchmarking exercise with other Surrey LPAs was undertaken. At the time Elmbridge had the 4 <sup>th</sup> highest number of planning officers. The poor performance is not therefore linked to understaffing or resourcing of the service. Following the restructure, the department has an additional 2 planning officers.
If we are struggling to meet deadlines why was the frequency of Sub Committee meetings reduced?	2	The frequency of sub committee was changed to allow officers more time between agenda runs to determine applications.

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<p>In the paper, emphasis is placed on efficiency and economy. However, whilst many residents may be concerned to see council tax kept down, in very many cases their concerns about planning matters will trump any worries about relatively small increases in expenditure, such as might be incurred by expanding the Planning Department.</p>	2	The Planning Service has been recently restructured to ensure sufficient resources are in place.
<p>It seems to me that the arrangements we currently have are ones which have evolved over time and fit the nature of this Borough. The focus should be on making sure we have a fully staffed and fully trained complement of staff in the Planning Department rather than tinker with the rules of delegation.</p>		
<p>We have APS as the local specialists, handling a whole variety of situations, where local knowledge is advantageous in gauging where the balance of weight that should be applied to opposing views should be placed. The main Planning Committee is then able to focus on broader policy issues and deal with a very small number of actual applications, almost as if it were a Court of Appeal. I think this two-tier system actually works well.</p>	2	All applications must be determined against National and Local Planning Policies. The balance of weight to material planning matters should be applied consistently by all committees on all sites throughout the borough.
<p>The suggestion is that there is no value in an application being looked at twice. But surely, this approach is deliberate in the case of strategic applications (however these are defined). There is value in establishing the local view and then evaluating whether the Borough interest should over-ride it. In cases considered twice the use of resources doesn't demonstrate inefficiency as much as necessary checks and balances. The point</p>		

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about confusing residents could be overcome by better communications. The point about no public speaking at Planning Committee could be solved by a stand alone change.		
In the Proposed Scheme of Delegation there is no mention of householder or single dwelling applications. Is it not considered necessary to spell out what the procedure with regard to these applications is?	1	All householder and single dwelling applications will be determined under delegated authority by officers unless the application is referred by a Member.
15 objections being required for an application to be brought to sub-committee is far too many and we should be remaining with 5.	1	5 objections is too low a threshold to distinguish between neighbour opposition and a strategic/controversial planning application.
In total, including those sent out by Kim Tagliarini there is a lot of documentation to review. Since the documents are of different styles and overlapping content it is difficult to present a coherent critique.	1	A presentation was included in the consultation documents, the presentation summarises the information for Members.
By definition, an application which attracts 5 objections is, surely, controversial? Additionally, why shouldn't non-strategic applications be reviewed if that is in the interests of residents? In any case, one of the thrusts of this proposal is to take all "strategic applications" away from sub-committees. If they are not to review strategic applications, or non-strategic ones, what is left?	1	Sub Committees will continue to review minor application of between 1-9 homes with 15 letters of objection. It will also review any householder or minor application referred by a Member.
When the May 21 <sup>st</sup> meeting came along, most Councillors seemed to be unaware of the impending changes. Most councillors at the Chairs & Vice Chairs meeting seemed quite happy that the proposal should go on to be decided in the Planning Committee meeting in June without any consultation with councillors.	1	Noted.

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<p>These proposals destroy one of the most important representational links which ward councillors have with their constituents by emasculating the area sub-committees. In addition, they significantly reduce the democratic means available to residents themselves to take issue with planning applications.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>By removing the referral of applications to Planning Committee the Sub Area Planning Committee decisions will be final for minor application up to 9 homes. The majority of applications for new homes would fall into this category.</p> <p>Members will still be able to refer householder applications to subcommittee.</p>
<p>Planning is a hot potato amongst residents and it is they who pay us. I think these changes will be seen as undemocratic - I know other councillors feel this to be more about hitting the numbers than serving those who pay us all. I think they are right. I am not opposed to changing the process and would like new proposals to be investigated, but these feel to me to be about making the officers' lives easier rather than better serving our 'customers'.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>The proposed changes are intended to ensure the existing Scheme of Delegation and 2 tier committee structure remain efficient, value for money for our residents and fit for purpose. In doing so it ensures the planning team have the time and resources to carry out its duties and provide an excellent level of service to the residents and applicants.</p>