

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Constitution Committee

Date of Meeting:	21 st November 2013
Report of:	Head of Governance and Democratic Services
Subject/Title:	Venue for Meetings of the Strategic Planning Board

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report invites Members to review the arrangements for determining the venue for meetings of the Strategic Planning Board following a request by the Vice-Chairman of the Constitution Committee.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee consider
1. whether any changes are needed to the current arrangements for determining the venue for Strategic Planning Board meetings; and
 2. whether there would be merit in undertaking a more general review of the planning arrangements in Cheshire East.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that the arrangements are practicable and appropriate.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Committee originally considered this matter at its meeting on 20th September 2012 following a motion to Council, proposed by Councillor D Brickhill and seconded by Councillor S Hogben, "That when the Strategic Planning Board agenda contains a majority of items from the south of the Borough, the meeting will be held in Crewe or Sandbach". The motion had been referred to the Committee for consideration.
- 4.2 The Committee considered a number of options. There appeared to be two alternatives. The first was to find a venue in a central location which could be used as a permanent venue for all Strategic Planning Board meetings. This would probably have to be at Congleton as there were no venues in the Sandbach area capable of accommodating the numbers of people who attended for applications relating to large scale developments. As the Council did not own any suitable venues in Congleton, the cost of hiring a venue, including the associated cost of hiring microphones and IT equipment, would be prohibitive. The second

alternative would be to hold meetings either at Macclesfield or at Crewe depending on where the balance of applications lay for a particular meeting. This would mean booking both venues in advance and then cancelling the one that was not needed.

4.3 Having considered the options, the Committee resolved as follows:

“That Council be recommended to agree that the venue arrangements for meetings of the Strategic Planning Board should be as follows:

That the Capesthorpe Room, Macclesfield Town Hall and the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Crewe be reserved in advance for every scheduled meeting of the Strategic Planning Board, with the room that is not required for a particular meeting being released at the appropriate time, the choice of venue to be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board in consultation with officers.”

4.4 Council at its meeting on 11th October 2012 approved the recommendation as set out.

4.5 Since the new arrangements have come into effect, 10 meetings of the Strategic Planning Board have been held in Macclesfield and 11 have been held in Crewe.

4.6 The current arrangements enable the Chairman to take a view as to the best possible location for meetings in the circumstances of applications on the agenda in the case of each meeting.

4.7 The Committee may wish to consider whether there would be merit in undertaking a more general review of the planning arrangements in Cheshire East to determine whether they are fit for purpose or whether suitable alternative models should be explored, for example, all applications, including ‘strategic’ ones, being dealt with by committees based on geographical areas.

5.0 Wards Affected

5.1 All

6.0 Local Ward Members

6.1 All

7.0 Policy Implications

7.1 None

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There would be a cost to the Council in hiring an external venue to hold meetings of the Strategic Planning Board if it were not possible to hold the meeting in a Council-owned building, as well as any additional costs relating to the hire of microphones and IT equipment.

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Constitution Committee is responsible for overseeing, monitoring, co-ordinating and implementing the Council's administrative and political business, including the administrative arrangements for and the conduct of the Council and other meetings.

10.0 Risk Management

- 10.1 None

11.0 Access to Information

- 11.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Paul Mountford
Designation: Democratic Services Officer
Tel No: 01270 686472
Email: paul.mountford@cheshireeast.gov.uk