

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Constitution Committee

Date of Meeting: 20th September 2012
Report of: Democratic and Registration Services Manager
Subject/Title: Notice of Motion - Venue for Meetings of the Strategic Planning Board

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The report invites the Committee to consider the following Motion, 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" which has been referred by Council to the Committee for consideration.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the options outlined in the report be considered by the Constitution Committee with a view to adopting one of the options as a formal policy.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To comply with the Notice of Motion request proposed and seconded at a meeting of full Council held on 19 July 2012.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 None.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Costs of hiring an external venue to hold meetings of the Strategic Planning Board if it is not possible to hold the meeting in a Council

owned building, as well as any additional costs regarding microphones and hire of IT equipment.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 None.

10.0 Background

10.1 Currently it has been the policy to hold meetings of the Strategic Planning Board at Macclesfield Town Hall, unless there are applications on the agenda which are likely to cause considerable public interest, in which case attempts are made to ensure the venue for that particular meeting is moved. This is done in consultation with the Chairman of the Board.

10.2 Difficulties have arisen for Officers in finding a venue that meets all the requirements of the Council when notice of what will be on the agenda for consideration is only confirmed 5 working days prior to the meeting taking place. A week prior to the agenda being published, Officers receive a draft list of the applications which may go to the Strategic Planning Board, however this list often changes and many of the applications don't make it onto the agenda.

10.3 A further problem that Officers face is the location of applications can vary widely. Generally there is a trend for applications to be in both the Crewe and Macclesfield areas and sometimes the number of applications is split proportionally. On other occasions, the agenda has contained applications for one particular area of the Borough, or more rarely applications relating to a number of areas within the Borough. The agenda published on 29 February 2012 illustrates the point well where there were applications for Disley, Tytherington, Shavington Cum Gresty, Middlewich, Congleton and Gawsorth.

10.4 Advice is sought from the Planning Department as to the nature of the applications and whether or not it is anticipated that many people will be attending the meeting. If an application is expected to be controversial and it isn't related to the Macclesfield area then the Officers do everything they can to ensure the meeting takes place in the affected area, however it has not always been possible to locate a suitable venue. One of the priorities is to ensure the agenda is published within the legal timescales and therefore as a result Officers are often left with insufficient time to spend on looking for an alternative venue if the key choices are unavailable.

- 10.5 Recently the Board have had to consider a number of applications for the Crewe area. Finding a suitable venue in this area which has sufficient room to accommodate the general public (any venue accommodating less than a 100 people would not be considered suitable), sufficient parking close to venue and microphone facilities all at a reasonable cost has proved extremely difficult. The Council Chamber in the Municipal Buildings in Crewe is frequently booked as is the Long Gallery in the Victoria Centre. The library in Crewe has meeting rooms, however the Council would need to hire out microphones at an extra cost and provide its own refreshments. In addition this room has an exercise class booked every Wednesday for the next year between 10.30am and 11.30am and it can only hold up to a maximum number of 80 people. On a few occasions the Council has booked Crewe Alexander Football Club which provides all the relevant facilities that Macclesfield Town Hall offers but this has been at considerable expense to the Council and is not considered to be financially sustainable.
- 10.6 A copy of the report has been circulated to the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the all of the Planning Committees and Councillor Mrs Rachel Bailey for comment.
- 10.7 There are a number of options which the Constitution Committee could consider and they are listed as follows:-

Option A

Keep Macclesfield Town Hall as the permanent venue for meetings of Strategic Planning Board regardless of the applications on the agenda.

Option B

Leave the decision to the Chairman's discretion.

Option C

Book the Capesthorne Room, Macclesfield Town Hall and the Council Chamber, Crewe Municipal Building in advance and then cancel one of the rooms if not required. (Note: For this Municipal year the Council Chamber may not be available for the dates required but Democratic Services could book it in advance for the next Municipal year).

Option D

Book a number of venues throughout the Borough and cancel all but the necessary venue once agenda has been confirmed.

Option E

Book a venue that is central to the North and South ie Congleton and keep it as the permanent base.

11.0 Access to Information

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

Name: Sarah Baxter

Designation: Democratic Services Officer

Tel No: 01270 686462

Email: sarah.baxter@cheshireeast.gov.uk