

Supplementary Information

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 22ND JUNE, 2023

Please note that the attached supplementary information was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item	
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3	Scheme for Submitting Views at Planning Committee Meetings	1 - 4
	To adopt the Scheme for Submitting Views at Planning Committee Meetings.	

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**Deputation re the proposed Scheme for Submitting Views at Planning Committee Meetings.
For Planning Committee 22nd June 2023
on behalf of Havant Climate Alliance and Friends of the Earth.**

We are concerned about some of the changes proposed which we think will reduce democratic processes in local planning.

C 1 + 2 + F 1b + Ha. It is noted that members of the public may only submit a written representation or to speak to committee, if they have already made a written representation about that planning application during the statutory consultation process.

This requirement should be removed.

Many members of the public, probably the majority, are unaware of how statutory consultation takes place, or that there is a Council website that they can look at. They may have been away from home for a while or busy with work or other commitments. For many reasons people may only find out about a planning application shortly before a decision is to be made at Planning Committee. These people should still have the right to submit their views to the committee even though they have not previously raised issues during the consultation process.

C 4. Written submissions will not be considered on a deferred application and will have to be resubmitted.

Unless there have been changes to the planning application, it would be reasonable if instead, those who submitted deputations previously, were contacted and asked whether they still wanted their deputations submitted, when a new committee date is known.

F 3. Deadline for Submission of a Written Submission.

It is proposed that a written submission must be received by the Democratic Services Team no later than 12 noon, 2 clear working days before the meeting e.g. 12 noon Monday for a Meeting on Thursday.

The previous deadline of 48 hours before the Committee meeting should remain unless it is intended to publish details of the Committee Agenda much further in advance e.g. 2 weeks beforehand. Often it seems that the Agenda of Planning Applications to be discussed, only appears on the website less than a week in advance giving little time for Deputations to be prepared.

G2c. Registering to Speak

As at F3. The deadline for this should remain at 48 hours before the Committee meeting.

G5. Time limits for Speakers

A time limit of 10 minutes for Supporters and 10 minutes for Objectors would allow a wider range of views to be aired and therefore better representation.

G4. Limit on number of speakers.

Limiting deputations to the first 2 objectors and first 2 supporters to register will not adequately represent what may be a wide range of valid views. With a time limit of 10 minutes for “each side” one would like to see up to 5 objectors or 5 supporters able to speak. In practice, if people are in agreement, it can be the case that 1 or 2 more able speakers, speak for the others.

G5d(i) Flexibility on number of speakers and time allocated, where an application is for more than 50 dwellings, is to be welcomed.

Pat Brooks

Some of you will already be aware that I came to the council with a promise to residents to argue for openness, transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. And I see those values not just as niceties, but as absolute necessities in any healthy democracy.

This policy motion, I fear, highlights why I have been talking about these things.

Whilst I don't for one second imagine anyone has consciously, deliberately attempted to avoid the values referred to, this motion reads as an attempt to stop or diminish local democracy. It reads as an attempt to get things done efficiently, which I commend, but in an attempt to improve process it seems prescriptive to the point of exclusion of any individuals who, for whatever reasons, are unable to meet the narrow process expressed in the motion.

It is imperative that local councils are perceived to be open and inclusive by the public. Inclusivity is a cornerstone of effective governance, and local councils must embrace transparency by providing ALL accessible avenues for public engagement, not seek to narrow options available to the public. Inclusive processes for public speaking at council meetings allows as many residents as possible to actively participate in the decision-making process. This open and participatory approach not only increases transparency but also fosters trust in the council's actions and decision-making. When residents feel that their voices are being heard and valued, they are more likely to trust the council's intentions and be supportive of its endeavours.

Nobody ever claimed democracy was the most efficient model for running anything. It was Winston Churchill who said democracy was "the worst way to run a country, except for the others."

Democracy, the ample right to free expression, doesn't exist because it's the most efficient model. It exists because it is the most representative.

The Western world faces a problem the 21st century as it has to try, through democracy, through what can sometimes be longwinded and time-consuming processes, to be able to counter the threat of authoritarian, dictatorial, unaccountable nations where such necessary checks and balances on power do not exist. The challenge of doing that within a democracy is considerable. Here, we have a microcosm of the problem. A desire to remove avenues of and for public expression would no doubt save the council some time, money and effort. That I do not wish to dispute. But that does not override the imperative for the council to have, and to be seen to have, policies and processes which seek to increase, not limit, public engagement.

To all members then, I ask you to vote against this policy motion. And I ask you to do so for two reasons:

Firstly, to uphold principles of democratic inclusivity.

Secondly, to enhance the reputation of Havant Borough Council.

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