

report



meeting	PLANNING & LICENSING COMMITTEE	
date	8 February 2011	agenda item number

REPORT OF COUNCILLORS CHRIS BARNFATHER & SYBIL FIELDING

REPORT BACK ON ATTENDANCE AT 2010 PLANNING SUMMER SCHOOL

Purpose of the Report

1. To report back on attendance at the Planning Summer School held at the University of York between 3rd – 7th September 2010.

Information

2. On 25th May 2010 the Administration Committee approved the attendance of two Members at the 2010 Planning Summer School. In the event the Planning & Licensing Committee were represented by the Chair and Vice Chair, Councillors Chris Barnfather and Sybil Fielding.
3. The Summer School is primarily a conference providing a setting and an opportunity for Members of Planning Committees to be kept up to date with recent developments and themes in the planning environment.
4. It is also an opportunity to refresh Members in respect of the legal implications of their role and function and where available to inform them of current Government thinking and proposed legislation which may affect their role.
5. The School consisted of whole school lectures and presentations to all participants, workshops and twilight sessions on selected planning topics. It also included a number of site visits and inspections to developments and planning infrastructure within the South Yorkshire area.

Content

6. The Opening Session was delivered by Pat Thomas, a lawyer specialising in Town & Country Planning Law and consisted of an update in respect of some recent legislative changes in Planning Law including:
 - Changes to Development Procedure Order
 - Changes to General Permitted Development Orders including listed buildings and conservation areas
 - Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010
 - Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009: Implications for Planning

The session also included aspects of recent case law applicable to the work of Planning Committees

7. This session was followed by a presentation by Stephen Tapper, President Elect of the Planning Officers Society and was particularly aimed at newly appointed Members of Planning committees and focused on outlining their role and functions within the Planning hierarchy.
8. The evening session on Friday 3rd September was hosted by former Cabinet Minister & Secretary of State for the Environment, Lord Deben (John Gummer) who gave a most informative and amusing presentation on the Coalition Governments planning approach and possible inclusions within the Localism Bill.
9. The evening finished with a Wine Reception sponsored by the Town & Country Association.
10. Saturday 4th September commenced with a presentation by Jaap Flikweert a Dutch expert in flood and coastal erosion risk management, who explored the potential impacts on society of climate change and rising sea levels and our possible response to the pressures that this will bring on society.
11. Hector Pearson currently heads the team within the National Grid responsible for planning policy, land & property issues and stakeholder engagement in the transmission part of the business and gave a presentation on maintenance and development of the power infrastructure.
12. The morning and afternoon sessions consisted of a series of workshops and we attended sessions including:

- Community Engagement – a focus on techniques of community engagement, with particular reference to the gypsies' and travellers community.
 - Allocating & Delivering Sustainable Housing Sites – a focus on two case studies in Harrogate.
 - Making Sound Planning Decisions – a participative workshop covering policy and material considerations, conditions and Section 106 obligations, procedures and probity.
 - Good Design (What does it mean) – a practical workshop exploring good design and its importance in development
13. The afternoon concluded with a presentation on 'Delivering Value for the Rural Economy' presented by Councillor Andrew Wilby, South Northamptonshire Council and focused on the regeneration of the market town of Towcester and the issues the local authority faced during the planning and process stages.
14. The evening consisted of a twilight session delivered by Andrew Jones of the York Archaeological Trust and entitled 'Ancient Excrement – An Avenue to York's Heritage'. This was an extremely amusing as well as informative presentation on the value that the scientific analysis of filth and excrement can provide to archaeologists and how it has assisted in tracing the origins and heritage of the City of York.
15. Sunday 5th September commenced with 'The Big Debate' which discussed the motion that 'Social housing should be provided by councils and market housing by developers' This was an interactive debate with speakers both for and against the motion and provided an interesting insight into the differing philosophies of conference speakers and attendee's.
16. During the afternoon Councillor Barnfather took part in a site visit to Woodland Model Village in Doncaster. The village dates from the early 1900's and was intended to provide decent homes for miners working at Brodsworth Colliery. It is a designated Conservation Area and is now part of a multi million pound Green Corridor Housing Regeneration project to improve life in former mining communities.
17. Councillor Fielding attended a site visit to the Selby Renewable Energy Park, which when fully operational will produce enough electricity to supply over 10,000 homes through a process involving the anaerobic digestion of food waste. This was followed by a conducted tour of the largest coal fired power station in the UK at Drax to learn about current issues associated with the plant, including the use of biomass for co-firing and proposals to build a stand alone biomass fired electricity generating facility alongside the existing plant.

18. The evening consisted of a Gala Dinner followed by a Question Time with a panel of Planning Summer School Members responding to a wide variety of questions on a range of planning issues and concerns raised by the audience.
19. Monday 6th September commenced with a presentation by Jack Hegarty, Managing Director of Wychavon District Council on the role of local authorities in encouraging the provision of necessary infrastructure and the funding issues involved.
20. This was followed by a presentation by Sir Michael Pitt from the Infrastructure Planning Commission on how we as a country are going to be able to deliver the national infrastructure to support the economy and vital public services.
21. The morning concluded with a Ministerial Address from Bob Neill MP, Parliamentary Under- Secretary of State at the Department of Communities & Local Government, whose duties include the planning brief. The presentation focused on the Coalition Governments planning agenda.
22. The morning and afternoon sessions consisted of a series of workshops and we attended sessions including:
 - Working Together – a case study focussing on ways in which Officers and Members can best work together to serve the community.
 - Planning & Health – a look at how green space planning can affect the health and well-being of residents and its importance in the planning system.
 - Delivering the Permission & Enforcing the Conditions – a focus on delivering the appropriate planning permission rather than enforcing the conditions.
 - Waste Planning - the focus was on the provision of waste facilities, its contentiousness in planning terms for elected Members and the processes used to recover value from waste
23. A lunchtime session discussed 'Place Shaping – the Role of the Backbench Member' and their importance in the planning process to represent the views of residents and communities.
24. The School closed with an address from Lord Richard Best, President of the Local Government Association on the disparities within society and its impact on planning and developmental issues and requirements.

Conclusions

25. The Planning Summer School provides an excellent opportunity for Members involved in the planning process to learn about current developments and government thinking in a complex area. Members of the Planning Summer School were helpful and responded well to delegate requirements. The quality of the speakers was good, with virtually all presentations being interesting and informative. There was a good mix and balance of subject matter and a humorous focus on occasions to soften the workload. The accommodation was appropriate and the catering to a good standard. A requirement to pay a Car Parking charge on campus on top of the course fees was deemed unnecessarily pecuniary and insensitive by the University authorities. The course represented value for money in the planning context and in the continuous development and training of Members.
25. We would strongly recommend that the Administration Committee support the attendance of two additional Members of the Planning & Licensing Committee at the 2011 Planning Summer School.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service and where such implications are material they have been described in the text of the report.

RECOMMENDATION

27. That the report be noted

Councillor Chris BARNFATHER

Councillor Sybil FIELDING