

COUNCIL MEETING

14 February 2017

QUESTIONS ASKED PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5.5

The following question has been asked pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 5.5 by Councillor D Cure:

“Would Councillor Howard Rogers as Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure of a Conservative Administration explain how he can dilute the Democratic Rights of residents of The Borough, by denying the right of neighbours and local residents to attend Area Planning Committee Site Meetings by a procedure which given its great implications has never been put to the Full Council.

Councillor David Cure”

Response by Councillor Howard Rogers

“The review of procedures for Members Site Inspections followed some initial consideration by a Panel of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and subsequent work by officers, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Area Planning Committees and myself, to reflect the decision of Cabinet to implement some practical improvements to the current Area Planning Committee system.

The underlying approach was to clarify how Members Site Inspections should take place, taking into account current national guidance and good practice and recognising that the sole purpose of such Site Inspections is for Members of the Planning Committee to survey the site and surroundings in order to inform their subsequent consideration of a planning application.

Site Inspections by Planning Committee Members are not occasions for any debate, comment or the expression of views by any party. It is important that Members of the Planning Committee are allowed to simply view the site. Any queries arising can be put to planning officers who will answer them or note for further investigation. Members of the Public or other third parties have no ‘right’ to attend such site inspections. They do, of course, have an appropriate right to make written representations and speak at a Planning Committee meeting when decisions are made. The new procedure makes provision for a relevant Parish Council representative to attend as an observer.

The changes made are ones of clarity for the benefit of Planning Committee Members, the proper conduct of Site Inspections and to ensure the robustness of decisions ultimately made by the Planning Committees. It is not a change that effects how the Council will look at planning applications or engage with members of the public through appropriate consultation”.