

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 8 JANUARY 2014**

REPORT BY: **HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

SUBJECT: **PLANNING COMMITTEE QUORUM**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To consider a recommendation from the Planning Strategy Group that the quorum of Planning & Development Control Committee meetings should be increased to 50% of the membership.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 The Planning & Development Control Committee of 21 members has the same quorum as other committees of a quarter of its membership. In practice this means that if six members are present decisions granting or refusing planning applications can be made by the Planning and Development Control Committee.

- 2.02 At its meeting on the 21 November the Planning Strategy Group received a report from the Head of Planning on the recommendations of the Welsh Government's study into the operation of Planning Committees in Wales. That study included the following recommendations:-

The size of Planning Committees should be between 11 and 21 members, the quorum should be a minimum of 50% of the committee and the use of substitutes should not be allowed.

- 2.03 The Planning Strategy Group resolved that there should be no change to the current arrangements regarding the size of the committee or the use of substitutes but that the quorum should increase to 50% of the membership (i.e. eleven).

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 The study commissioned by the Welsh Government forms part of the background to the proposed Planning Reform Bill and White Paper which the government is due to publish shortly. Whilst at some time in the future legislation may be passed requiring a larger quorum for Planning Committee meetings the Planning Strategy Group is keen to make changes in advance of any legal requirement to do so.

- 3.02 The size of Flintshire's Planning and Development Control Committee is at the very top end of the range believed to be an appropriate size for Planning Committees. The current quorum would allow decisions to be made by as few as six members. Anybody disappointed with the decision reached by so few members is likely to take a poor view of only a quarter of the members being involved in the decision reached. A larger quorum is also likely to result in a greater consistency of decision making. Increasing the quorum is unlikely to cause practical difficulties as normally at least this number of members are in attendance when decisions are reached.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That the Constitution be amended so that the quorum for meetings of the Planning and Development Control Committee be 50% of its membership.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 None as a result of this report.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 None as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 None as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 None as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 None as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 Any changes to the Constitution require consultation with political Group Leaders and the Chair of the Constitution Committee anyone of whom can require the matter to be considered by Council.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 11.01 The Planning Strategy Group is Chaired by the Cabinet member with responsibility for this area and the Chair of Planning Committee is a member of the Planning Strategy Group. Both were present when this decision was made by the Planning Strategy Group.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Minute of Planning Strategy Group meeting of the 21 November 2013 when it considered the Welsh Government study into the operation of Planning Committees in Wales.

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